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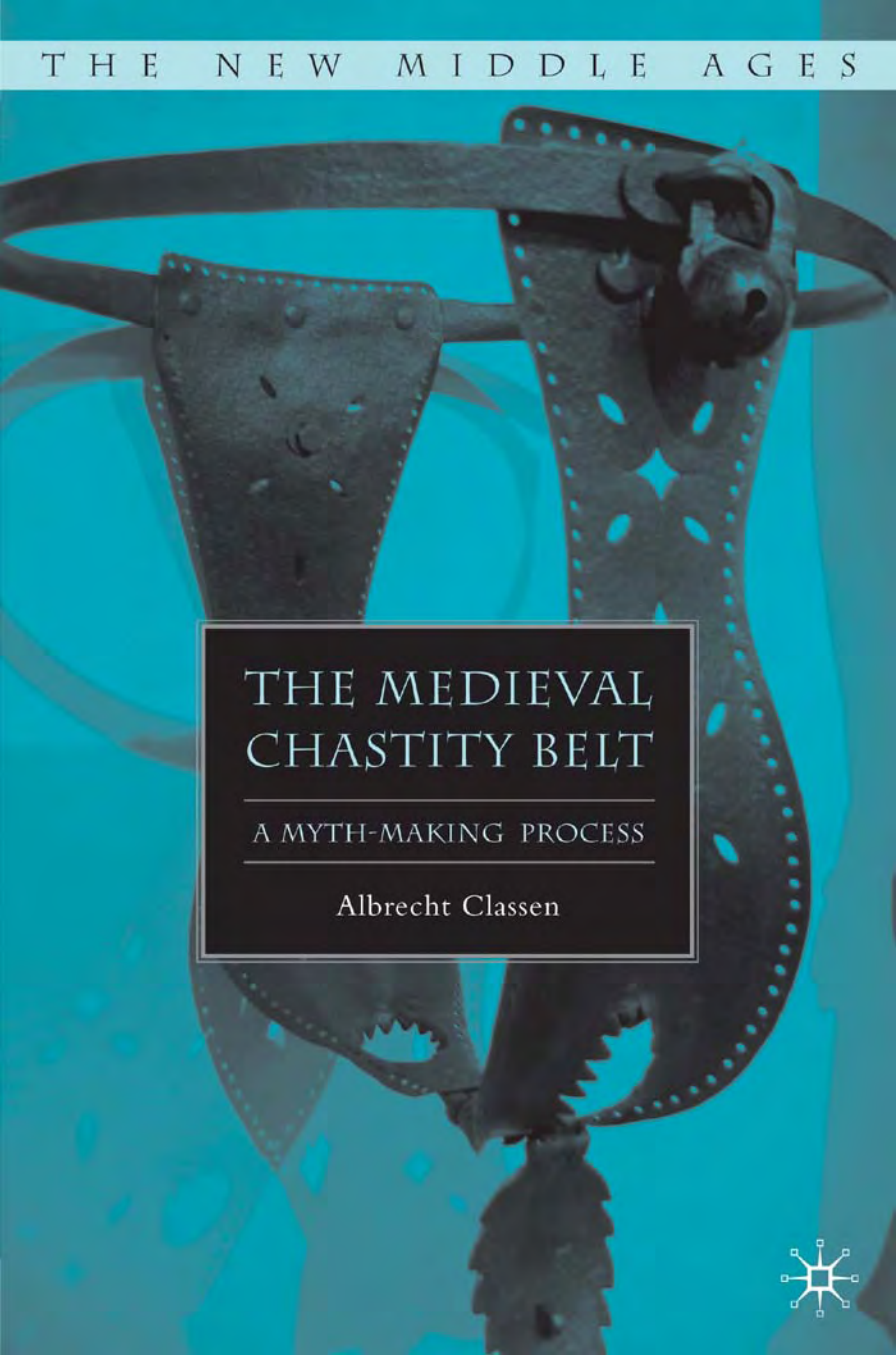

THE MEDIEVAL CHASTITY BELT

A MYTH-MAKING PROCESS

Albrecht Classen

THE NEW MIDDLE AGES

BONNIE WHEELER, *Series Editor*

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The Medieval Chastity Belt: A Myth-Making Process
by Albrecht Classen

THE MEDIEVAL CHASTITY BELT

A MYTH-MAKING PROCESS

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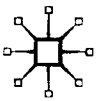

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CONTENTS

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INTRODUCTION

All studies in the field of cultural history are shaped by individual and collective mental filters that can be extremely powerful and often create difficult obstacles in our exploration of questions concerning the past to which traditional textbooks provide no answers, and which they sometimes seem to discourage us from asking in the first place. Moreover, these filters have tended to implant mythical concepts in our minds, allowing us to dream and fantasize about the past based on our own imaginations, rather than on actual situations, concrete developments, specific ideas, inventions, and events in the past. The film and publishing industries (see, for instance, Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose* [1980] and Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* [2003]) have successfully tapped into this enormous reservoir of myths concerning the Middle Ages, a world we tend to idealize or demonize, according to our individual attitudes, needs, and imagination because it is both far away from us to allow us to fantasize about some kind of past, and close enough to comprehend the connections to our own world. The less we know about that age, however, the more tenaciously do commonly held notions about that age influence our minds. Modern scholars sometimes complain about the infinite spread of false information about the past, only to retreat into their academic seclusion. But this retreat is not necessary, and it amounts to self-defeat and a self-imposed delegitimization, especially since a critical discussion of the origins of some of these myths, and a careful examination of those sources that contributed to their dissemination, can provide very illuminating insights that may appeal to a wider readership as well. This approach is exciting, because the deconstruction of a myth sheds enormous light on our own cultural background and illuminates much of the educational tradition that has shaped our thinking about the past.

The study of the myth-making process involving the alleged medieval chastity belt has wider implications, because the modern fascination with this curious, somehow titillating object sheds light on many other common ideas concerning the past, such as the Middle Ages as a "dark age." What is progress, and how do we define it, whether we think of religion, philosophy, technology, and general knowledge of our world in geographical, physical,

chemical, and historical terms? Can we compare our own civilization to that of previous centuries? What measures could we use to carry out such a comparison? Of course, such questions open up a Pandora's Box concerning many other aspects of Medieval Studies. Technical and scientific progress is not necessarily correlated with moral and ethical progress. People's basic instincts and emotions, such as aggression, love, hatred, friendship, passion, fear, and jealousy, have been deeply influential at all times and in all cultures. However, the history of literature, the visual arts, and music indicates that our approaches to these instincts have changed and are constantly evolving. Disturbingly, too many times people all too often project their own personal perspectives and experiences back into the past, because a simple black-and-white canvas makes it easier to claim a certain degree of knowledge and, above all, moral superiority.

Investigating how the myth of the chastity belt emerged will allow us to grasp some of the fundamental problems of historiographic epistemology, because historical and cultural knowledge is constructed and constantly subject to manipulations on behalf of vested interests. For instance, the huge field of encyclopedias, lexicons, dictionaries, and the like, clearly reveals the extent to which so-called factual information has been handed down from one author to the next, without anyone ever trying to verify or refute the evidence offered in support of their claims. This is very much the case with the idea of the chastity belt. It is extremely difficult to determine how a myth emerges and then develops, because so many different voices contribute to this process. Myths arise out of ideas, and sometimes out of concrete observations, whether they are valid or not. Mostly, their often sensational nature appeals to large and ever-expanding audiences, and soon a critical mass is established that translates the myth into the realm of factuality.

With respect to the chastity belt, for instance, it seems quite possible that some jealous husbands during the late Middle Ages hit upon an idea to control their wife's chastity, and invented a mechanical device, although this has never been documented and would be contradicted by modern medical research as a matter of high improbability because a woman would not even survive the consequent hygienic and health problems after several days. But let's assume that one husband indeed created such an object and might have tried it out on his wife. Its curious, if not perverse, nature probably caused rumors to spread quickly, and since the chastity belt was so intimately connected with sexuality, the gender relationship, and power structures within the family, satirical authors and artists, political propagandists, and later collectors and curators quickly and then firmly embraced the idea that the chastity belt actually existed in the Middle Ages and was in widespread use.

Figure 1 Hanns Schell Collection, Graz, Austria

Once this position had been reached, the myth-making process accelerated and today it has reached a most intriguing status because of its symbolic function as a husband's mechanical tool to control his wife's sexuality during his absence. To malign the chastity belt as an instrument of patriarchal subjugation of a woman by her husband became, for instance, a battle cry for feminist writers who use the Middle Ages as a convenient, though certainly highly problematic, historical backdrop for their modern

political agendas. This is not supposed to be a criticism of feminism, or of women's struggle to free themselves from any kind of patriarchal subjugation today, whereas the erroneous use of allegedly "historical" examples as a warning of the consequences resulting from men's mistreatment of women today will be the object of the critical examination here.

One of the most famous, because so hilariously satirical, references to the chastity belt as a grotesque, though only alleged, inheritance from the Middle Ages can be discovered in Woody Allen's popular movie "Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Sex" (1972) in which a court jester tries in vain to open the huge chastity belt on the body of his lord's wife, the queen. The movie was based on the best-selling guidebook to human sexuality by David R. Reuben, first published in 1969, reprinted many times thereafter (last in 2000) and translated into Spanish, French, Italian, German, Swedish, Hebrew, Polish, Chinese, Finnish, Vietnamese, and Russian, if not into other languages as well. As one of the many methods for birth control, Reuben also mentions the chastity belt:

> Originally used during the Middle Ages by knights who wanted to defend their wives' honor while they were defending the honor of their country, it was a sort of armored bikini. There was a screen in front to allow urination and an inch of iron between the vagina and temptation (sic!). The whole business was fastened with a large padlock. Even in those days love laughed at locksmiths (and padlocks) and many a knight returned to find his wife with a virtuous look on her face and a two-month pregnancy under her cast-iron underwear. The only thing to be said for the chastity belt is that used conscientiously it will prevent conception (and everything else).[1]

Woody Allen had watched a late-night television interview with Dr. Reuben and purchased the film rights to the book from producer Jack Brodsky. The production of Allen's movie cost $2 million, but the movie's screening grossed $8.8 million in U.S. and Canadian distribution, not counting the video production. Naturally, Dr. Reuben protested publicly against the distortions created by Allen in his movie, but the latter defended himself by saying that "this book was silly also. . . . It could have fallen into worse hands than mine."[2]

Let us turn to some of the cinematographic details. In the opening skit, "Do Aphrodisiacs Work?" Woody acts the role of a rather pathetic medieval court jester who tries to make love with the queen and gives her an aphrodisiac to drink. As soon as she feels the effects, she urges him to make love with her, but they both fail in their attempt to commit adultery because he cannot take off the huge chastity belt, and when he employs all kinds of metal objects to open the padlock by force, including a huge

halberd that he had fetched from one of the guardsmen outside the queen's chamber, the noise awakens the king who comes rushing in, catching them almost in flagrante. Just a minute before his arrival the jester had managed to open the chastity belt, but in the process of hastily helping the queen to get "armored" again, his right hand gets caught in the chastity belt on her behind. When the king realizes what has happened, or rather what their intentions had been, he orders the jester's decapitation.

Woody Allen deliberately combines medieval and Renaissance features, incorporating allusions to Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, and freely operates with anachronistic elements (jester wearing glasses, references to tomatoes, a black man as a magician who concocts the aphrodisiac). The jester's efforts to break the padlock—of course only the husband has a key to his wife's chastity belt—lead to grotesque comic, especially when he slams the halberd at the padlock, calling it "beaver shooting," whereas the queen's vaginal area is called "portal of ecstacy," and "royal box." When the jester's right hand gets caught in the iron belt around her hip, which later forces him to hide behind or underneath the queen, he describes this uncomfortable situation in modern terms, talking about his hand being "stuck in the cookie jar." The perhaps most facetious linguistic formulation proves to be the jester's exclamation when he discovers the chastity belt, calling it "heavy underwear." And in his desperate attempt to explain the compromising situation to the king, the jester excuses himself with a reference to the husband's own invitation to the jester: "whenever I am in town, I should look up your wife."

Little wonder that the combination of pseudo-scientific sexology with its speculative historical approach employed by David Reuben, whose book-length study exerted an international influence, and the cinematographic spoof by Allen with its grotesque satire of the medical treatment of sexuality deeply implanted the myth of the medieval chastity belt in public awareness—once again, and particularly in North America. And considering the degree to which Allen ridiculed Dr. Reuben's serious attempt to provide some information about the absurd-looking chastity belt, the effectiveness of which he seems to have doubted himself, thereby indirectly casting a major shadow of doubt on the authenticity of the chastity belt, blocked any further attempts to investigate the myth of the chastity belt from a scholarly perspective. The myth won, so to speak, over any attempt to investigate this curious object and its history more critically.

It is high time that this myth is examined critically to shed light on its origin and development, and its impact on public notions regarding the past as a model case for addressing the hermeneutic problematics that cultural historians always face. This book will try to address these aspects and offer a scholarly critique based on a comparative and interdisciplinary

approach. Certainly, the chastity belt seems to be a matter of trivial jokes and silly comedy predicated on general notions about the Middle Ages. And I can only hope that the laughter about this absurd object as a fantasy product since the fifteenth century, will eventually shatter some of the sturdiest myths about that age. The fifteenth-century author Conrad Kyeser had understood the facetious character of the chastity belt and had obviously tried to pull his audience's leg when he incorporated a drawing of such a belt into his book on war machinery. Once all evidence has been evaluated, let us join him in his laughter and lay this myth to rest.

CHAPTER 1

THE CHASTITY BELT: FICTION AND TRUTH ACCORDING TO SCHOLARSHIP AND POPULAR OPINION. A CASE STUDY OF THE HISTORY OF MYTH-MAKING: INTRODUCTION

The Creation of a Myth—The Flat-Earth Theory as a Foretaste of the Hermeneutic Problem

As fascinating as the Middle Ages prove to be for modern audiences, numerous aspects, ideas, practices, laws, and customs allegedly practiced in medieval culture and today utilized by popular novels, movies, art work, and computer games belong to the world of fiction. Often, at least, people are not truly interested in history, instead they want to confirm their fantasies about the past through wildly speculative, untrustworthy, but glamorous and imaginative projections, hence the medieval movie.[1] One of the most influential myths about the Middle Ages concerns the much debated shape of the Earth hence the interrelationship between science and religion. As the common argument goes, Columbus's journey across the Atlantic Ocean in 1492 was a bold move in clear challenge to those who believed that the Earth was flat, so he proved for once and all that the theory was wrong. In other words, the discovery of America did not only introduce the modern world in geographic terms, it also represented a fundamental paradigm shift away from a religious, dogmatic, explanation of man's physical environment toward trustworthy, verifiable, empirical sciences. Washington Irving, in his 1828 biography of this famous discoverer, presented a most impressive scene of Columbus facing the Council of Salamanca (1487) and arguing for the validity of his conclusions that it would be possible to sail all the way west to reach China. Irving

comments on the situation of geographical knowledge in the Middle Ages and paints a bleak picture, condemning medieval sciences as incompetent and ignorant because of the strong belief in the absolute validity of the Biblical words over practical experience:

> All subjects were still contemplated through the obscure medium of those ages when the lights of antiquity were trampled out and faith was left to fill the place of inquiry. Bewildered in a maze of religious controversy, mankind had retraced their steps, and receded from the boundary line of ancient knowledge. Thus, at the very threshold of the discussion, instead of geographical objections, Columbus was assailed with citations from the Bible and the Testament. . . . Thus the possibility of antipodes, in the southern hemisphere, an opinion so generally maintained by the wisest of the ancients, as to be pronounced by Pliny the great contest between the learned and the ignorant, became a stumbling-block with some of the sages of Salamanca.[2]

Irving delights in making fun of the learned Spanish scholars who represented the Middle Ages in its darkest form, trusting the theological authorities more than the experimental sciences. He has one scholar, in particular, step forward who "cited from Lactantius to confute Columbus":

> Is there any one so foolish. . .as to believe that there are antipodes with their feet opposite to ours; people who walk with their heels upward, and their heads hanging down? That there is a part of the world in which all things are topsy-turvy: where the trees grow with their branches downward, and where it rains, hails and snows upward? The idea of the roundness of the earth. . .was the cause of inventing this fable of the antipodes, with their heels in the air. . . .[3]

Unfortunately, Irving was fantasizing here, not about Columbus's meeting with this powerful council in Salamanca, but about their assumption that the Earth was flat. The Spanish savants fully understood the problems that Columbus would face if he were to sail west, arguing, rightly so, that the geographic distance between Europe and China would be so vast that the entire expedition would fail since the ships could not take enough food and water with them for the long journey. They could also not imagine that there would be any inhabitable land beyond the reach of the known world. Moreover, they rather trusted the Biblical account, not to forget its countless interpretations and the learned treatises by the Church Fathers, with regard to the nature of the unknown than they would trust this simple mariner and his hypotheses.[4] But there were no arguments pertaining to the shape of the Earth, only arguments pertaining

to the actual size of the globe! In mathematical terms, as we know today, Columbus did not only miscalculate the actual distance between the Canaries—from where he planned to set sails—to Japan, namely 4,450 km instead of the actual 22,000, he also manipulated the figures available to him by previous geographers and scientists. In Jeffrey Burton Russell's words, "If God or good luck had not put America—the West Indies—in the way to catch him, Columbus and his crews might indeed have perished, not from falling off the earth but from starvation and thirst. Columbus clinched his argument to his patrons by adding that the voyage could probably be broken at intervening islands."[5] Already Pierre d'Ailly (1350–1420) had specifically pointed out the spherical nature of the Earth, and so had John Burridan (ca. 1300–58), Nicholas Oresme (ca. 1320–82), Giles of Rome (1247–1316), and Roger Bacon (ca. 1220–92).[6] Certainly, there were always some theologians, such as the African Lactantius (CE 245–325) and the sixth-century Eastern Greek Christian, Cosmas Indicopleustes, who believed the opposite. But just as determined individuals and even major church groups today firmly believe that Darwin's Theory of Evolution has to be rejected outright in favor of the notion of Intelligent Design, some people in the Middle Ages stubbornly refused to abandon their conviction of the Earth being a flat disk.[7]

Writers of vernacular romances and related genres tended to obfuscate the entire issue, which means, as Jill Tattersall observes, that "one can rarely, if ever, be sure whether 'the world' in these works signifies the entire Earth, or merely that part of it known to humans. Even in Latin texts it is not always clear what meaning is attached by individual writers to such words as *orbem*, *terram*, *mundum*; in vernacular texts the problem is particularly acute."[8] Even when romance authors provide more specific references to the Earth and its scope and shape, we cannot clearly identify what concept they embraced, especially since such geographic information seems to have been of little value for them.

In fact, most of the references in the fictional texts concerning this issue are so vague in their use of terms that Tattersall's final conclusion—"there is some evidence to suggest that, before 1300 at least, many people in France actually thought of the world as a disc" (46)—does not seem fully warranted. By clear contrast, the entire learned discourse throughout the Middle Ages was predicated on the precise understanding of the Earth having a spheric shape.[9]

Nevertheless, the myth of medieval people having been entirely convinced of the flat-earth theory has been a dominant feature in common modern notions about the Middle Ages. Unfounded, but certainly most drastic in its explanation of the difference between the modern world and its past, this idea conveniently, though erroneously, casts a negative light on

medieval scholarship and glorifies modern concepts of how to explain our physical environment. This is not to say that all medieval scholars were convinced of living on a round-shaped globe, but the majority of them were certainly aware of the actual physical properties of the Earth.

The point here is that modern opinions about the Middle Ages often draw from a mythical concept of the past which relies on a false interpretation, or on fake objects, most likely in order to pride themselves of our scientific, social, and political progress. In Mark Jones's words: "In the fakers' work we can see exactly what it was that they believed to characterise the antiquity of the object faked; exactly what was necessary to meet expectations about such objects and so secure their acceptance."[10] By the same token, Gerhart von Graevenitz warns us of the historiographical automatism that assumes "that a change on one floor of history can find the causes of this process only in its foundation and that the echo of this change will, sooner or later, become audible on other floors as well. The possibility that such connections might exist need not be questioned, but its schematization into a uniform principle of history, into a teleology of the organism, many times modernized and surviving in myriads of forms of 'reflections.' This teleology implies that the total organism that is moving toward its goal, also has to move toward this goal with all its members."[11]

But the flat-earth theory was also a highly convenient battle cry in the war between the sciences and religion waged by the end of the nineteenth century in response to Charles Darwin's development of the Theory of Evolution. Both John William Draper and Andrew Dickson White (1832–1918), the founder of Cornell University as the first secular university in the United States, published enormously popular books in which they outlined the battle between modern sciences and religion. Both were strong promoters of the flat-earth theory as a negative backdrop to their own glorious perspectives and attitudes toward the sciences, and so they deeply influenced generations to come with their ill-informed opinions about the "dark" Middle Ages.[12]

The public protests against the seemingly "un-Christian" explanation of Earth history in light of Darwinian theory instigated the defenders of modern science to project their opponents as ignorant, backward-oriented, and outright ignorant of basic geographic, historical, and scientific facts concerning medieval intellectuals.[13] On closer examination, however, White's extensive study did not specifically claim that medieval people believed in the flat-disk shape of the Earth. He actually adduces a number of statements to the contrary, whereas he finds plenty of evidence that medieval theologians seriously questioned the possibility of antipodes living on the other side of the Earth. In his grandiose and rhetorically dazzling fashion, White exclaimed: "soon the question had become theological; hostility to the belief in antipodes

became dogmatic. The universal Church was arrayed against it, and in front of the vast phalanx stood, to a man, the fathers."[14]

The careful analysis of American textbooks published since 1890, often under the direct influence of Washington Irving's *History of the Life and Voyage of Christopher Columbus*, powerfully illustrates how ideological struggles easily lead to the formation of myths that soon become so widespread that even the best scholarly efforts to stem the flood of wrong information must fail.[15] By the same token, in the wake of the French Revolution, Antoine-Jean Letronne (1787–1848), member of the Académie Royale des Sciences, by then renamed *Institut National*, forcefully developed a Flat-Earth theory on his own under the influence of his mentor Edmé Mentelle (1730–1815). Often resorting to a blend of belletristic and scientific writing, Letronne managed, perhaps even more extensively than Irving, to make the negative estimation of the Middle Ages and its allegedly infantile understanding of the Earth's geography to a standard concept in the mind-set of many generations to come.[16] Any simple questionnaire among students and other population groups would confirm that a majority is still that medieval people believed that the Earth was flat.[17]

The best proof for this phenomenon has been delivered most recently by Thomas L. Friedman in his new study on the global changes in economy, technology, and business, *The World is Flat*. Though utilizing the myth of the flat-earth theory only in a metaphorical sense, and actually quite facetiously, his comments are still worth citing at length. In his introductory comments about his discovery of the economic revolution taking place in present-day India, and elsewhere, he comments, drawing heavily from the traditional myth concerning Columbus's discovery: "Columbus reported to his king and queen that the world was round, and he went down in history as the man who first made this discovery. I returned home and shared my discovery only with my wife, and only in a whisper. 'Honey,' I confided, 'I think the world is flat.' "[18]

Friedman uses the myth to discuss his realization that the playing field involving formerly third-world countries, such as China and India, on the one hand, and the Western world on the other, has become equalized. Citing one of India's smartest engineers, he reports, he "was essentially telling me that the world was *flat*—as flat as that screen on which he can host a meeting of his whole global supply chain. Even more interesting, he was citing this development as a good thing, as a new milestone in human progress and a great opportunity for India and the world—the fact that we had made our world flat!" (7). For Friedman, the old myth of the Earth being flat is a most convenient metaphor to come to terms with fundamental changes affecting the postmodern world. His reference to the concept of the world being flat as an idea espoused at least by people who

had opposed Columbus explicitly confirms how much mythical thinking continues to hold sway even amongst contemporary intellectuals and critical thinkers. This is not to criticize Friedman, but instead it helps us to understand how much we still need to struggle against such deeply anchored but wrong notions about the past because they affect the present in many ways. If we allow these myths to continue to endure until today, what hope then would there be for a critical examination of our own world in its cultural-historical, religious, philosophical, and socioeconomic traditions and context? If the basic theoretical platform of Friedman's explanation of the changing relationship between the Western and the Eastern world is predicated on a mythical concept erroneously drawn from the past, how could we subsequently trust his conclusions regarding the current conditions and issues at stake?

The Nature of Mythical Thinking

Myths have always been a major factor in dealing with the past, especially because they offer easier, more radical, and more contrastive perspectives; they simplify and create moral categories and hierarchies in our thinking, putting the present clearly ahead of the past because history must have developed, hermeneutically speaking, in a linear, progressive fashion.[19] According to this thinking, the modern world must be better than the past, and since, today, we know of the global shape of the planet Earth, medieval people, in a ridiculous fashion, must have assumed the opposite. Consequently the highly pervasive idea emerged that the Middle Ages were a "dark" age, or a time when the intellectual, artistic, moral, and religious development still lagged behind, which the Renaissance thinkers finally overcame through their revival of classical learning and a new approach to the physical space.[20] Ernst Cassirer located the root and purpose of myth in language and the need for all human beings to come to terms with their past and present world through linguistic manifestations: "For all mental processes fail to grasp reality itself, and in order to represent it, to hold it at all, they are driven to the use of symbols. But all symbolism harbors the curse of mediacy; it is bound to obscure what it seeks to reveal."[21] Those who embrace a myth "grasp only the great, fundamental, qualitative contrast of light and darkness, and how it treats them as one essence, one complex whole, out of which definite characters only gradually emerge."[22] Refining his definition of myth, Cassirer emphasizes that "[m]ythical thinking, when viewed in its most elementary forms, bears no such stamp; in fact, the character of intellectual unity is directly hostile to its spirit."[23] In terms of language and its mythical function for our understanding of our existence, he concludes, "Again and again, in this

respect, myth receives new life and wealth from language, as language does from myth."[24] When language, however, serves to create an illusion, the power of the myth proves to be one of the most powerful instruments in undermining the discriminating, analytic mind, inviting it to accept blanket statements for simple explanations of the past.

This does not come as a surprise because many historiographical theories are based on the assumption that cultural development proceeds from a lower to a higher level, unless a certain people perceives itself as living in a time of decline.[25] Mythical thinking today does not necessarily fall back to classical Greek and Roman mythology, but instead it is based on a broadly defined nonrational thinking process that makes it possible to comprehend the world and the past in simplistic notions according to a priori concepts of good and evil. Myths invite identification with a past figure, event, object, or idea that might substitute for a shortcoming in the present.[26] According to Nicole Dentzien, the "cultural openness of a legend shifts according to the status of the culture(s) that brought it forth, or the culture(s) that promote(s) it. The historical openness changes if new literary or archeological evidence is unearthed or rediscovered, or if manuscripts or landmarks are lost or destroyed."[27] She explains the second component with a reference "to the inability to verify the historicity of mythical heroes, their achievements and adventures, and the artistic freedom that comes from, as well as the curiosity that is aroused by, this uncertainty."[28]

Moreover, all interpretations of texts offer new perspectives and are not straightforward transmissions or translations. "The gap between a text and its reception/transmission leads to numerous and often contradictory variants of the original. Consequently, the interpreter is no mere 'translator' but a creator in his or her own right."[29] Following Wolfgang Iser's reader-response theory, every reception of a text differs from the original, and the more readings of a text or an object (e.g., painting) are offered, the further away we move from it in turn because of a "fundamental asymmetry between text and reader."[30] This easily becomes the basis for mythical thinking about the past, but it also offers the opportunity to deconstruct such mythical approaches and to return to the original document through a careful hermeneutic rapprochement. Nevertheless, as Carl-Friedrich Geyer comments, "the mythical thinking merges the general and the special without any differentiation, whereas scientific thinking perceives the special as a variable which can be associated with other variables."[31]

Since the time of the Enlightenment, if not already long before, we have been victims of a form of self-illusion of a steadily growing humanity which has freed itself from the shackles of the past and approaches a glorious future where rationality, logic, and tolerance dominate.[32] Not surprisingly, certain objects, such as the chastity belt, or ideas, such as

courtly love, serve supremely well as icons of a past world as we imagine it, either in idealistic terms, or highly pejoratively, whereas the present does no longer accept those or has changed them thoroughly out of utter disrespect and ridicule. The danger, of course, rests in our tendency to replace one myth with another, and the more we deride and criticize institutions, people, and ideas from the past, the more we submit to a mythical ideology determined by a teleological presentism (giving absolute priority to the own present world) which enjoys radical priority over pastism (giving priority to a historical thinking about the past as an entire alterity).[33] As Kathleen Biddick defines the former: "Presentism looks into the mirror of the Middle Ages and asks it to reflect back histories of modernist or postmodernist identities."[34]

For instance, freedom, tolerance, and democracy are commonly claimed as the highest ideals of the modern Western world, in radical contrast to the Middle Ages which were determined, without chronological or any other order, by the Inquisition, the phenomenon of the witch-craze, pogroms against Jews, and the Crusades, that is by highly irrational, intolerant, dogmatic, and authoritarian methods and principles.[35] This binary opposition is as wrong as could be, since neither side squarely fits into these black-and white-categories, but mythical thinking prefers such contrasts since they facilitate the explanation of human history, whether correctly or not. This history, or the cultural development, has always been much more complex and diversified than is commonly assumed. We can easily identify outstanding representatives of medieval tolerance, and, by the same token, representatives of modern tyranny, and vice versa.[36] The crimes of the present ought not be weighed differently than the crimes of the past. Correspondingly, outstanding intellectual, literary, or artistic accomplishments by medieval people ought not be treated as irrelevant or outdated in comparison with works produced in the modern time. Undoubtedly, we live in a much improved, perhaps more civilized, world characterized by enormous advances on the political, technological, scientific level. But this does not justify the perpetuation of wrong ideas and subjective value judgments concerning the past with regard to its standards of ethics, morality, philosophy, aesthetics, and even technology and sciences.

Other criteria to define a myth or, closely related, a fake, rely on the type and mode of disseminating knowledge, allegedly factual in nature, but untested, mostly unverifiable anyway, highly untrustworthy, yet popular, appealing, and widespread but simple and straightforward, not requesting critical examination. The more certain notions or ideas are acknowledged as true and then reported by others, creating a large network of "authoritative" sources, the more a concept of something in the past can gain the status of absolute truth in the present. We can concur with Mark Jones in his discussion of the nature of fakes: "They are, before all else, a response to

demand, an ever changing portrait of human desires. Each society, each generation, fakes the thing it covets most. . .Where there are fakes it is clear that there was a booming market in the things thus imitated: fakers are above all creatures of the market."[37]

From a political perspective, myth can be characterized as "a traditional story that usually involves supernatural or imaginary persons and embodies popular ideas about nature and social phenomena. . . . It is a 'fable, an allegorical fiction originating in certain real events, re-created through wish and imagination in such a way that starting from a fact, it ends representing and meaning something else'. . . . Myth is the most ancient outlook that explains the world and determines human behavior. . .but, in spite of its 'archaic' connotation, underestimating its role in human history might be a mistake."[38] In fact, as Michel Tournier observed, myth is "une histoire fondamentale," because it "unites story, history and the urge to express some basic truth about humanity."[39]

In his excellent review of myth theory, Eleazar M. Meletinsky also discusses the approach pursued by Lévi-Strauss and reaches the insightful, complex, and for our purposes highly fruitful conclusion:

> According to Lévi-Strauss, myth is simultaneously a diachronic narrative that records the historical past and a synchronic means of explaining the present and even the future. These two dimensions meet in particular mythemes. The diachronic dimension, which is the syntagmatic development of the plot, is indispensable for reading the myth, whereas the synchronic dimension reveals its meaning. . .Lévi-Strauss's paradigmatic analysis concentrates on the coherence of mythical plots. This integral structure, in all its particular expressive forms within the myth, has a larger meaning that cannot be reduced to its various syntagmatic elements. The plot is made explicit by means of repetitions, even though it is the product of logical oppositions. The switch from a structure based on oppositions to a structure based on simple replication gives rise to the "serial" myth, the embryonic form of the fiction genre.[40]

Moreover, in light of Roland Barthes's theories, Meletinsky emphasizes, "Mythical ideas are fuzzy because they are composed of associations, and their ultimate goal is to be functionally appropriate. . . . Myth plays with analogies of form and sense. The form itself can even imbue the absurd with meaning, as in surrealism. . .myth always chooses images with deficient or diminished meaning so that it can more easily confer new meaning on them—in caricatures and symbols, for example."[41]

The two genres of lexicons and encyclopedias play a major role in the establishment of myths because once an idea has entered such a reference work, it becomes almost impervious to critical examination and unchangeably

insists on representing a factual phenomenon over many editions. Myths spread because people believe such statements without questioning their foundation and validity, and because they offer plain explanations and straight perspectives, whether in a diachronic or in a synchronic fashion. A simple interpretation of the past or of "the Other" has always been easier than to accept the complexity, ambiguity, and even ambivalence of specific phenomena, people, ideas, and institutions.[42] Christopher Lloyd correctly emphasizes that "[m]yths are not untruths (except in popular parlance), but rather attempts to locate truths in convenient fictions."[43]

Since the topic of the chastity belt has as much to do with medieval and Renaissance art, literature, and history, as with nineteenth- and twentieth-century scholarship and popular culture, the apparatus to this book will be as important for the development of the argument as the actual text. The deconstruction of myths is a painstaking work requiring most detailed analysis and critical evaluation of a vast body of publications. After all, it is very easy to utter and/or spread a rumor, or even a lie based on presumptuous and unverifiable claims, whereas the labor to combat such a rumor, a misconception, or simply a wrong notion about some aspects from the past, proves to be hard, tiring, and sometimes even endless. This is not to say that I did not enjoy my research on the myth of the chastity belt, and I also hope that I have reached a solid conclusion convincing my readers of the validity of my observations. But we always need to keep in mind that myths tend to appeal to public tastes, whereas historical analysis that shatters traditional viewpoints and deconstructs endearing, time-honored, and authoritative opinions about something in the past regularly meets resistance, if not hostile opposition. As Angela Carter states, "Myths deal in false universals, to dull the pain of particular circumstances. In no area is this more true than in that of relations between the sexes."[44] In this sense we can also concur with Roland Barthes, according to whom myths are "depoliticized speech"[45] insofar as they "transform history into nature,"[46] meaning that the average consumer misreads myths as facts, whereas they only represent a value system.[47]

The Chastity Belt

Many myths concerning the Middle Ages abound even, if not especially, today, whether we think of individual heroes, saints, evil creatures, monsters, objects, buildings, values, rituals, and morality.[48] One of these myths will be the central object of this study, which will shed significant light on the often curious and deleterious history of medieval scholarship since the eighteenth century. I will also examine fundamental problems modern research faces regarding the pervasiveness of deeply ingrained concepts of

the past that continue to dominate popular opinions contrary to all critical evidence. The reason I focus on this one myth has not so much to do with its highly curious and salacious nature which might titillate so many an uninformed reader, but because of its enormous popularity, especially in modern times, particularly outside of the world of academic Medieval Studies, hence its mythical dimension. More than anything else, it seems, the chastity belt, also known as the girdle of chastity, evokes numerous images about devious practices, falsely confirming negative evaluations of the past, yet inciting the erotic fantasy, after all.

In a small survey of my students, involving a total of 148 respondents (fall of 2005, University of Arizona), 117 had heard of the chastity belt, and 31 had not. When asked, "Do you think that the chastity belt had been in common use, and if yes, when," 56 agreed, and also correlated the chastity belt with the Middle Ages; and six with the Renaissance, whereas two were not sure about the time period. But 53 students stated that the chastity belt had not been in common use, whereas two were unsure. In response to the statement, "If you agree that the chastity belt had been in common use, do you agree or disagree with the following statement: In the Middle Ages, jealous husbands often forced their wives to wear a chastity belt," 45 clearly agreed, whereas seventeen clearly disagreed, all the others either did not answer or were not certain. If this very small sample means anything, we can be certain that the chastity belt is commonly known today and identified as an object used in the past, whether by husbands or by fathers. Most respondents had only a vague idea about the chastity belt, but still affirmed that they had heard something about it. In other words, we are dealing with some kind of historical knowledge, though it remains obfuscated, yet influential after all—truly fertile ground for the formation of a myth.

Why have so many modern writers spent so much attention on this topic when there is no certainty at all as to its authenticity? Why is there such a widespread assumption that medieval knights applied chastity belts to their wives' bodies? Why would we even associate the chastity belt with the Middle Ages? Was it perhaps a product of perverse medieval and/or Renaissance customs within marriage, or would we have to relegate the idea of the chastity belt to the world of early-modern imagination about how to control wives? In other words, would we have to identify this bizarre and absurd girdle as a reflection of mythical thinking, projected back onto the past by modern writers, or as a result of male erotic fantasy and especially fears of female dominance in the area of marital sexuality? Could it be that we would have to determine the many rumors about the chastity belt as based on fact, or were they the result of public satire with which writers and artists ridiculed overly jealous husbands throughout time?

Once introduced as an idea, cultural historians have, over and over again in numerous fashions, media, and narratives, happily referred to the chastity belt as a curious fact which attracted attention both from serious historians and from the broad readership. The myth of the chastity belt might have been entirely based on an idea spawned sometime in the fifteenth or sixteenth century, or it could have been based on actual objects from the Middle Ages that might, or might not, have served the alleged purpose of forcefully protecting wives' chastity. Consequently, this study will look, on the one hand, at the history of scholarship and relevant literature which deals, in one way or the other, with the chastity belt. On the other, we will also have to examine closely those few medieval and early-modern texts and illustrations that deal with chastity belts. We can also be certain that a number of museums and collections still hold specimens of allegedly medieval and early-modern chastity belts, made out of metal, leather, and cloth. But these do not allow easy, if any, dating, especially since they might have been early-modern creations or replicas that had been produced in order to confirm mythical ideas in the first place, and serve only to a very limited extent as confirmation about the foundation of an idea of how medieval husbands treated their wives. Of course, modern metallurgy would provide invaluable help, especially with regard to particular oxidation patterns and the patination, but I will have to leave all this to the experts.[49]

Fact or fiction, that is the question! If the chastity belt was a myth, why and how did this myth emerge? On the other hand, if the chastity belt can be identified as an object that had been indeed used on a regular basis by individuals, that is, jealous husbands, for their wives, why would these men have believed that such an apparatus might have actually and successfully served its intended purpose? To deal with this curious object, we have to examine medical, biological, social, ethical, and moral aspects, and we must take into account literary, historical, art-historical, scientific, and theological evidence to disentangle a hodgepodge of modern ideas about sexuality and marital relations in the past. To be up-front with my main argument, I do not think that we are dealing with a historical reality, irrespective of the numerous museum pieces still available today. Instead, the idea of the chastity belt is a myth that has developed deep roots in people's minds because so many "authoritative" writers in areas such as anthropology, ethnology, history of morality, and art history have claimed the opposite, whereas there are no serious studies on the chastity belt by medievalists or Renaissance scholars. In order to demonstrate that the discourse of the chastity belt was predicated on a myth and continues to operate as such in modern minds, a careful examination of the development of earliest scholarship concerned with this topic until the present is required.

Finally, against this backdrop we will have to analyze those literary and historical texts, and also paintings, woodcuts, and other artworks that include the motif of the chastity belt from the Middle Ages to the nineteenth century.

In a short entry to the supplement volume to the *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, William Chester Jordan raised a number of relevant questions regarding the myth of the chastity belt. Considering the technical, medical, and biological aspect of this contraption, he wonders: "How could such a mechanism have been designed to permit the normal activities of urination, evacuation, menstruation, and hygiene, yet prevent both anal and vaginal sexual penetration?"[50] And: "How could serious chafing be avoided. . .—for by definition a device that absolutely preserved chastity needed to be worn day and night, day in and day out, and, in the case of crusaders' wives and mistresses left at home, for years at a time?" (107). He alerts us, however, to the fairly common usage of the allegorical phrase "cingulum castitatis" in many theological treatises, all basically drawing from St. Paul's injunction in Ephesians 6:11–17 to "take unto [themselves] the whole armour of God," to have their "loins girt about with truth," and to wear the "breastplate of righteousness" (108).

Jordan's puzzlement and doubt are shared by most contemporary medievalists interested in matters pertaining to sexuality, marriage, and gender issues, especially because the notion of virginity was of highest importance within the theological context as an allegorical or metaphorical figure.[51] By contrast, however, popular notions always tend to identify the "chastity belt" somehow with the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. How do we come to terms with the considerable conflict between, on the one hand, sweeping assumptions by the nonacademic public regarding the chastity belt as a significant representation of one of the allegedly devious objects perversely characterizing the premodern world and, on the other, the surprising lack of interest in this mythical object on the part of medieval and early-modern scholarship?[52] The public has often chuckled about this contraption, and blithely accepted the reliability of the historical claim regarding its existence and application in the Renaissance and earlier, not understanding anything about the long history of faulty scholarship, the deliberate satire on the part of late-medieval and early-modern writers and artists, and the huge problem of source studies and their proper hermeneutic interpretation.

As I want to demonstrate in this study, mythical thinking, untrustworthy colportage (rumored reporting), naive approaches to historical documents, and uncritical treatment of alleged authorities have all contributed to the creation of the highly popular, widely disseminated notion of the medieval chastity belt.

Jordan, though refreshingly critical, unwittingly demonstrates himself where some of the problem rests, and this even within most recent research. Remarkable, for instance, he refers to "an alleged picture. . .dated 1405" (107), an information that he probably had culled from Eric Dingwall's *The Girdle of Chastity* (first printed in 1923). Ironically, however, particularly in this case the information is not an untrustworthy reference, this picture actually exists—it is contained in Conrad Kyeser's *Bellifortis*—and the date of its origin is also correct, as I will demonstrate later. This means, we cannot even hope to begin with the deconstruction of this and other deeply ingrained myths related to the Middle Ages and the Renaissance if we do not thoroughly check our sources and carefully verify their claims. The need to do so today has also not diminished, if it has not even increased because of the dramatic surge in modern interest in the Middle Ages, though mostly in very popular, hence untrustworthy approaches (movies, novels, buildings). The more myths infiltrate the public mind, the more our true understanding of the past itself and of the formation of historical knowledge are obfuscated.

In this respect, I can only agree with Jordan in his emphasis that the Latin sources understood the image of the chastity belt only, and truly only, as an allegory. One of many examples would be Abbot Bernard's teaching:

> Honesta virgo, moneo te, ut teneas fidem firmam in corde, galeam salutis in capite, signum crucis in fronte, verbum veritatis in ore, voluntatem bonam in mente, timorem et veram dilectionem Dei et proximi in pectore, *cingulum castitatis* (emphasis added) in corpore, honestatem in actione, sobrietatem in consuetudine et bonitate, humilitatem in prosperitate, patientiam in tribulatione, simplicitatem in conversatione, spem certam in Creatore, amorem vitae aeternae, perseverantiam in bonis operibus usque in finem. Amen.[53]
>
> [Honest virgin, I admonish you to hold your belief firmly in the heart, the ship of health in the head, the helmet of salvation on your front, the word of truth in the mouth, the good will in the mind, fear and true love of God and your neighbor in the chest, the girdle of chastity in the body, honesty in action, sobriety in habit and good behavior, humility in prosperity, patience in tribulation, simplicity in conversation, certain faith in the Creator, love for the eternal life, perseverance in all good works until the end. Amen.][54]

Another example can be found in the *Philosophical History* by the eighth-century Greek author Damascius who relates, for instance, an anecdote from the life of the philosopher Theosebius:

> Theosebius, the most temperate of men, had agreed to have relations with a woman in order to produce children. Yet as no children were born to them,

> Theosebius displayed the ring of continence and told his wife: "Wife, long ago I gave you a ring to govern a union destined to bring forth children; now I give you this ring of continence which will help you henceforth to live a chaste domestic life, provided, of course, you are able and willing to live with me in a pure manner; if not, you have my permission to take another husband; I will give you away affectionately and with good will as a friend would do to a friend. But the wife accepted his proposal with joy and lived the rest of her life with her husband without any sexual intercourse.[55]

Again, however, this "ring of continence" [σωφροσύνης δακτύλιν] bears no similarity with the late-medieval/early-modern chastity belt and is clearly identified as a symbolic-religious object representing virtue, prudence, abstinence, with no semblance of a girdle that would protect a woman's genitalia from unwanted or prohibited sex. Finally, Christian iconography, especially in the Baroque period, knows well the motif of the belt in the legendary context of the Virgin Mary granting her belt to the doubting St. Thomas ("Gürtelspende") as a proof of her ascension to Heaven, but this has absolutely nothing to do with the chastity belt.[56]

But Jordan does not answer the question how the idea, if not myth, of a chastity belt forced upon wives by jealous husbands at least since the fifteenth century emerged and how it was disseminated until the present. Particularly common notions about previous mentalities and strange practices in the past—the chastity belt is only one of many practices—another being the Spanish Inquisition—which require a careful and highly critical reexamination of older scholarship and its influence on public opinions.

Modern Myth-Making

Let us begin with a rather popular, purely fact-oriented reference work, a historical compendium on craftsmanship and technology covering the last 7000 years. Its author, H. F. Döbler, naively argues, "Die seltsame Erscheinung des Keuschheitsgürtels, der aus Eisen geschmiedet und mit einem Schloß versehen die Hüften umschließt und zwischen den Beinen der Frau hindurchreicht, hat es erst im europäischen Mittelalter gegeben" (The curious phenomenon of the chastity belt, forged out of iron and equipped with a lock, embracing the hips and extending through the woman's legs, was invented not before the Middle Ages).[57] The tone of this article is characterized by its emphasis on the curiosity of this object ("seltsame Erfindung") and the alleged factuality of its existence. On the other hand, the author does not offer any concrete evidence for the existence of medieval chastity belts, although he describes it in surprising detail. After all, this is a popular lexicon of technology and craftsmanship,

and there is no room to question the authenticity of any object mentioned here. Numerous photos of other objects, especially of non-European people wearing hair dresses, belts, shoes, coats, tattoos, and so on indicate how much the phenomenon of the chastity belt conformed to the need of anthropological myths concerning the Middle Ages, providing the modern reader with a cultural-historical perspective that indicates the progression and advancement of the twentieth-century world in Europe where such objects would only be regarded as strange icon of a past era with highly dubious moral and sexual practices.

After all, the entire discussion of the chastity belt is contained in a brief entry on belts at large without any specific historical context or anthropologically reliable criteria. The author simply discusses belts as worn in ancient Egypt, the material of belts in general, and then suddenly, almost out of context, chastity belts. The emphasis in the subtitle on the book cover on "Sachlexikon" (Lexicon of Facts) indicates how much the presumed reader was regarded as a naive, noncritical but fact searching individual, which explains the detailed discussion of the chastity belt as a representative object of medieval culture at large. As the introductory comments to this lexicon indicate, the publisher approached his task with the premise that historians basically know nothing about technology, whereas technicians have no clear notion about history. By the same token, he claims that the philologist knows nothing about anthropology, and the anthropologist nothing about culture and literature. Both curiosity and the urgent need for factual information would be the driving selling points to convince the educated readers to purchase this volume.[58] The discussion of the chastity belt might well have contributed to the marketing strategy and success in selling this reference work.

Undoubtedly, the anonymous author of this short entry, like many others before and after him, enjoyed referring to the chastity belt as one of the most condemning examples of male chauvinism in the Middle Ages, severely criticizing its application as monstrous. Nevertheless, he still felt the urge to introduce and describe it as representative of a past culture in which husbands wanted to control their wives' chastity by means of such an atrocious mechanism.

In 1970 the publishing house R. Löwit reproduced F. M. Feldhaus's lexicon of the history of technology, first printed in 1914.[59] Although the editor, Carl Graf von Klinckowstroem, emphasizes that much new research has been done since then, Feldhaus's work still would deserve to be made available again because of the richness and more or less factual value of its information. Not surprisingly, we also find a fairly lengthy entry on the chastity belt. Earlier critics who had questioned its authenticity are rejected outright because the belt is documented in Kyeser's *Bellifortis*, the manuscript

of which is today kept in the Göttingen university library (ms. Philos 64, fol. 130). A copy of the illustration follows in this article. In 1520 Hans Baldung (Grien)—wrong attribution!—created a woodcut showing a naked woman wearing a chastity belt who is standing between an old man, apparently her

Figure 2 Hanns Schell Collection, Graz, Austria

husband, and a young man, assumingly her lover. Whereas she takes money out of the old man's purse, who tries to hold on to her through a clumsy attempt to embrace her, the lover already holds a key in his hand to open the lock to her belt. Scrolls above their heads explain the situation. The one for the woman says: "Es hilft kain sloss für frauwen list. . ." (There is no lock against women's rusefulness). The scroll for the young man reads: "Ich drag ain Slüssel zu sollichen slossen. . ." (I carry a key for such locks).[60] The author also mentions Pierre de Brantôme's memoirs, *La vie des dames* (ca. 1590), a woodcut by Melchior Schedel from ca. 1550 ("Es Mag Passiern"), actual chastity belts held in the collections of Castle Erbach in the Odenwald, of Castle Kreuzenstein near Vienna, in the Arsenal in Venice, in the Musée Cluny in Paris, of castle Runkelstein in Tyrol (today in Vienna), castle Forchtenstein, castle Seebenstein, in the Germanisches Nationalmuseum in Nuremberg, in the Kunstgewerbe-Museum in Berlin, in the National Museum Munich, in the collection J. Salzer in Vienna, in the Frauenklinik in Würzburg, and in the collection of Dr. Pachinger in Linz. The Kaiserin Friedrich-Haus in Berlin is alleged to hold not only two chastity belts for women, but also a male chastity belt. As a reflection of his effort to confirm the authenticity of such belts, the author also lists a number of previous studies: O. Wormius, *Museum* ([Leiden 1655], 389), Legati, *Museo Cospiano* (Bologna 1677), Neickel, *Museographia* (Breslau 1727), appendix; Freydier, *Plaidoyer contre l'introduction des cadenats, ou ceintures de chasteté* (Montpellier 1750), Caufeynon, *La ceinture de chasteté* (Paris 1904), and *Antiquitäten-Rundschau* (1904).[61]

The article is accompanied by a copy of the illustration in Kyeser's text, a copy of Baldung's woodcut, a copy of Melchior Schedel's coat of arms, and five photos of chastity belts in the various collections (Erbach, Kreuzenstein, Vienna, Berlin, and Linz). As to the attribution of this woodcut to Baldung, see my lengthy discussion further.

American and British scholars in the field of Women Studies and Sexology have also solidly embraced the idea of the chastity belt and, mostly uncritically, eagerly disseminated the traditional reports about this curious object. Barbara G. Walker summarily describes the chastity belt as follows: "Medieval device for locking a woman's potential lovers out of her body, while her husband was away from home at wars, pilgrimages, or crusades. The pelvic fetter had small spiked holes through which urine, feces, and menstrual effluents might pass—in theory. In practice, it would have been impossible to keep clean. Vaginal infections, skin eruptions, and ulcers would have been inevitable after wearing such a device for only a short time, let alone months or years." The conflict between theory and practice suggests that Walker tends to relegate the idea of the chastity belt into the realm of myths, in accordance with the key term of her book title,

but then she adds the little bit of historical information: "In 1889 the skeleton of a woman was found in a 15th-century Austrian graveyard, still wearing the chastity belt that probably caused her death."[62] This would imply that these apparatuses existed, after all. As we will see later, there might be an entirely different interpretation of this metal object on the female corpse, but for the time being Walker's testimony supports the observation of the myth's enormous influence even today.

Walker in turn had culled her information from R. Brasch's *How Did Sex Begin?* where the reference to the chastity belt serves as a segue to lament men's perennial cruelty against women: "Perhaps nothing speaks worse of man's lack of trust in his wife—and in the moral strength of a woman—than the existence of the chastity belt."[63] Brasch also hastens to add that it was probably fairly simple for those tortured women to ask a blacksmith for a duplicate of the key and to free themselves. The invention of the medieval chastity belt is traced to Konrad Kyeser's *Bellifortis* (1405) with an illustration of such a girdle, and to the tyrant of Padua, Francesco II, who was strangled in 1406. Brasch also refers to the discovery of a chastity belt on a female skeleton in 1889, but he does not support his account with any reference to scholarly literature and triumphantly concludes this section with the comment: "Unmistakably, her waist was still encircled by a chastity belt" (25).

In their *Cradle of Erotica*, Allen Edwardes and R. E. L. Masters go so far as to argue that medieval people not only used the chastity belt, but also pierced women's labia to put padlocks into their vaginas: "Corresponding to the female chastity belt was the famous little padlock. The prepuce was pierced and the padlock inserted and locked, with the key being handed over to its appropriate keeper. This keeper might be some guardian of morals eager to prevent coitus, sodomy, fellatio, and self-abuse."[64] More recently, the *Complete Dictionary of Sexology* defines the chastity belt as a device "for both males and females in use from medieval through Victorian times designed to prevent sexual indulgence. Male chastity belts were designed to prevent involuntary nocturnal seminal emissions and masturbation. Female chastity belts were designed to secure the wife's sexual fidelity when the husband was absent."[65] Finally, Kenneth Maxwell chimes into this chorus of popular writers about sex in history, confirming, once again, that the chastity belt was "involuntarily worn by some unfortunate women in the Middle Ages. . . . It is said that a German emperor before leaving on a crusade had an iron device made for his wife, the queen, and had it riveted by a blacksmith."[66] The first mention of the chastity belt could be found in medieval European literature since the twelfth century, but he questions the authenticity of most of the museum pieces still extant today, dating, on the average, from the sixteenth century. Although he is realistic enough to include a short reference to blacksmiths who could easily produce replicas,

which actually should have alerted him to a major fault of the historical logic offered here, he concludes: "clever locksmiths did a thriving confidential business" (55).

None of these authors can claim to be true historians, or literary scholars. Their studies or reference works superficially digest or summarize older publications, but they do not investigate any of the sources, they do not question the validity of their claims, and they consistently become victims of sexual sensationalism regarding allegedly horrifying practices in the past. The myth of the chastity belt lives on and meets ever new believers, especially among those in the fields of feminism and Gender Studies because the myth is regularly coupled with a profound disgust about male abuse of women throughout time, but particularly as the result of alleged barbarism of the patriarchal culture in the Middle Ages. It also needs to be observed that most opinions about the medieval chastity belt are influenced by an anthropological paradigm according to which the medieval past was a world determined by primitivism and a lack of culture, otherwise a barbaric instrument such as the chastity belt could not have been invented and applied to women. Anthropologists, ethnologists, and sociologists have been some of the most important culprits in the dissemination of this myth, which has served so well as an effective foil for the presentation of the modern age as more civilized, advanced, and cultured.[67] But the process of civilization, so famously outlined and discussed by Norbert Elias—and this also in light of the chastity belt—does not necessarily pursue a linear development, hence progress is no guarantee for later generations.[68]

The Medieval Chastity Belt in Popular Opinion and its Sources

A simple search on Google for "chastity belt" produced between 221,000 and 8686,000 hits (depending on the day of the search), and the search for "girdles of chastity" produced between 140,000 and 224,000 hits. When the adjective "medieval," was added the number was considerably lower, but still between 21,500 and 104,000 hits; and "infibulation" results in 59,300 to 234,000 hits (tested both in May and September 2005 and January 2006). If we use the German word, "Keuschheitsgürtel," we get between 105,000 and 496,000 hits, and for the Italian, "cintura di castità," between 7,000 and 31,700 hits. The French term, "ceinture de chasteté," results in 77,200 to 219,000 hits, and the Spanish, "cinturon de castidad," between 7,000 to 32,400 hits. Most, if not all of these, seem to be erotic, pornographic, or otherwise sexually explicit websites that don't deserve to be studied in any serious manner regarding the specific scholarly value of their information

concerning the origin of this erotic object. But many of them, if they even venture into some historical speculations,[69] draw their information from the one and only major investigation into this mysterious topic, Eric John Dingwall's *The Girdle of Chastity* (1923). Dingwall illustrated his monograph, just as earlier and contemporary scholars did, with photos of chastity belts held in various museums. These are used today as proof for the historical authenticity of chastity belts by many creators of webpages dealing with this topic.[70] A critical examination of Dingwall's findings and a careful evaluation of his conclusions seems to be the natural starting point for any serious discussion of the chastity belt whether it might have been a myth or a concrete object that had been used in the past by jealous husbands. But several decades before another study had appeared in print, Alcide Bonneau's *Les cadenas et ceintures de chasteté* (1883), which was first published in English, then still anonymously, in 1931 under the title *Padlocks and Girdles of Chastity*.[71] This book might well have been the cradle of the modern myth regarding the chastity belt, as Dingwall culled much information from it. His *Girdle of Chastity*, in turn, seems to have deeply influenced Esar Levine's *Chastity Belt* (1931), but the latter does not acknowledge Dingwall's contribution at all and claims to have started with his investigations from scratch.[72]

Moreover, a French scholar, Dr. Caufeynon (1904/1905), had also offered a fairly detailed investigation of the chastity belt, though without adding relevant new information. Levine, however, left out all scholarly references, except for a few citations incorporated into the text, although he also dealt with much of the same evidence assembled by his three forerunners. In the following paragraphs I will examine the arguments developed by all four authors who can be credited with having contributed the most to the scholarly and also popular discussion of the chastity belt since the late nineteenth century.

Myth-Making Stage I: Alcide Bonneau (1836–1904)

Bonneau takes a surprisingly serious approach, probing the ancient Greek custom of maidens wearing a girdle at a nubile age and taking it off after marriage, but then he refers to the "pseudo-Meursius's *Aloysia*" (10) as evidence that the chastity belt was "presented by the husband to the wife in the morning of his wedding-night, as a most suitable means of maintaining union and good understanding between them, by dispelling all his jealous fears" (10). As the second chapter informs us, already nineteenth-century scholars seriously questioned the authenticity of the chastity belt, such as Monsieur de Laborde, in his contribution to *Notice des dessins, cartons, pastels, miniature et émaux du Louvre* (1866).[73]

He already insisted that we do not trust such allegedly historical objects, stressing, "Forced interpretation have given a tale a sort of legal existence, and several to recommend curious collections belonging to amateurs' museums. These girdles have not existed as the current fashion, especially in so sprightly a nation as ours; they may have been exceptionally invented, as the whim of some maniac. I reject them, therefore, and advise amateurs to do so likewise."[74] Bonneau concedes that there has probably not been a widespread custom, but he suspects (!) that jealous husbands and lovers might have forced "their wives or mistresses to put on girdles of chastity in Spain, Italy and even in France" (14). Insofar as a material chastity belt would indeed protect a woman's vulva from being accessible for a man (14), and insofar as the "frailty of woman is so well known, ever since Eve and her adventure with the Serpant" (15), there seems little doubt in Bonneau's mind that these apparatuses might have existed. He also refers to the cruel practice of infibulation as an indirect confirmation of his thesis regarding chastity belts (16–17), and his description reads surprisingly similar to those used by scholars in the late twentieth century.[75] But Bonneau even imagines that actual rings that could be bolted with a lock were implanted into the vaginal lips: "As to the women, they wear there an iron circle provided with a lock, the key of which the husband holds" (17). Significantly, Bonneau at this point exclusively refers to such methods practiced in Egypt and Sudan and suddenly implies that even such horrid strategies by husbands would not be good enough to prevent their wives from committing adultery as soon as they would have left: "the woman does not hesitate to get herself ripped up in order to receive her lover" (19). Before her husband's return she would ask a maid to sow her up again—truly a grotesque white male Orientalist fantasy deeply informed by profound misogynist attitudes regarding women's excessive sexual needs that cannot be controlled except through brutal force.

After a lengthy discussion of male infibulation during antiquity (for slaves, singers, and players), Bonneau turns to the European Middle Ages and mentions Francesco II of Carrara, the last sovereign lord of Padua (d. 1406), who was claimed to have been the first person in the Middle Ages to put a chastity belt on his wife's body. Strangely, he undermines his own historical claim by emphasizing the legendary character of the lord, basing his views on various reports about the latter (23). Quoting a travel account by Abbé Misson (*Journey to Italy*, II, 112), he emphasizes that Francesco also had a box full of locks: "Ibi etiam sunt seroe et varia repagula quibus turpe illud monstrum pellices suas occludebat" (24; There, too, are padlocks and several kinds of safety-tools with which the fool monster locked up his concubines). According to some of the claims of the older sources, one of the reasons why he was executed was that he had put chastity belts on the

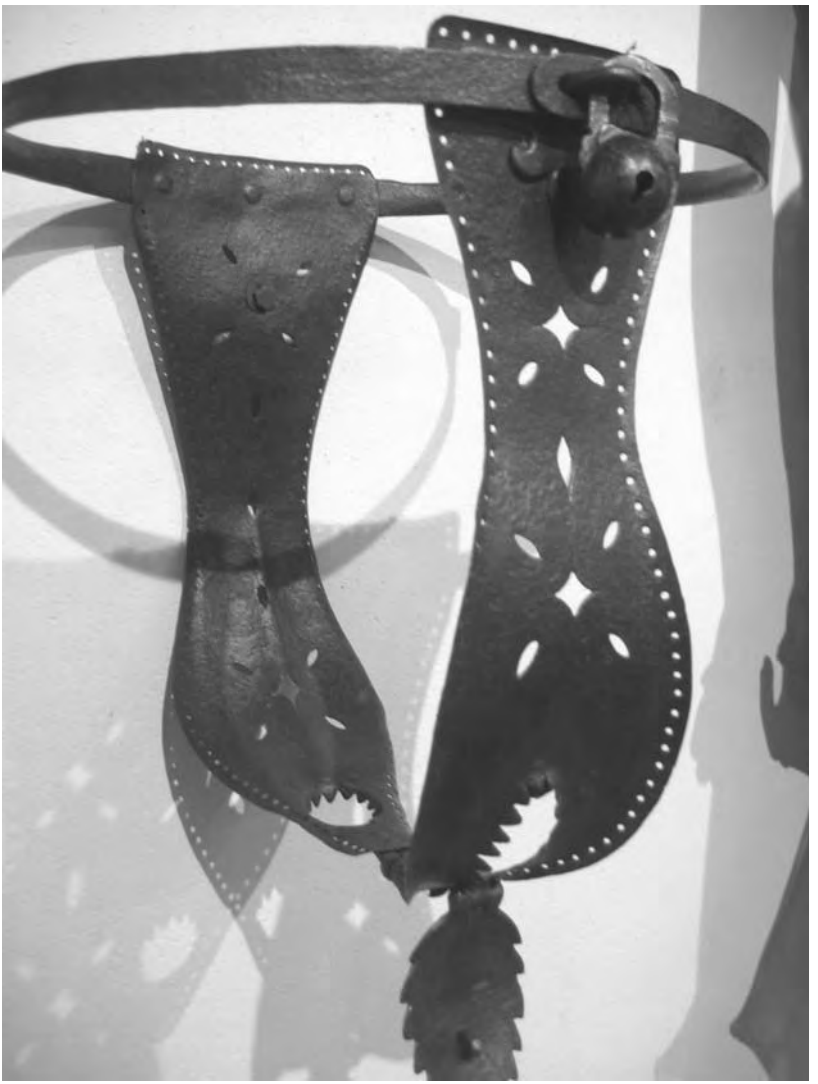

Figure 3 Hanns Schell Collection, Graz, Austria
(same as Figure 1, but from a different angle)

women under his control. Bonneau, however, reaches a different conclusion regarding the objects exhibited in Venice and which most of the subsequent authors obviously overlooked. Nevertheless, it deserves careful attention: "and great has been our disappointment, indeed, not to find any, or to find

such facts as are in complete contradiction with the assertions of Misson, Freydier and Dulaure" (25).

Francesco was put to death because the Venetians regarded him as a dangerous political enemy. Surprisingly, none of the chronicles consulted by Bonneau mention any padlocks, not to speak of torture instruments (26), which forces the author to conclude: "Abbé Misson must have lent too complaisant an ear to the stories of some sophisticated cicerone" (27). A subsequent report about the small arsenal of the Palace of the Doges, written by President de Brosses ca. 100 years later, mentions only one lock and one woman, the Tyrant's own wife, to whom it was supposed to have been applied. Brosses himself reveals that he was the victim of historical deception when he comments: "This woman must have had a great deal of honor, as the lock is extremely large."[76]

Curiously, after this solid dose of demythification, Bonneau returns to his eager quest to identify historically authentic chastity belts, and refers us to the specimen held in the Musée de Cluny, but also indicates, quite unwittingly, how much this object is surrounded by further myths that cannot be supported by any facts, namely that Henry II had put this girdle on Catharina de Medici's body (28).[77] Once we begin to dig deeper, one element after the other of the overall myth begins to collapse. Unfortunately, Bonneau did not realize this and copied the relevant passage from Nicolas Chorier's seventeenth-century novel, *Joannis Meursii elegantiæ; latini sermonis; seu, Aloisia sigæa toletana*, as additional proof that chastity belts existed after all, not realizing that the historian here unsuspectingly draws from a fictional account in order to prove his spurious thesis. Shortly thereafter the entire critical discussion about chastity belts breaks down and gives way to rumors, allegations, and myths that gain credibility only because authoritative figures had argued along the same line, though not less naively:

> Every one is agreed, at least among us, to credit Italy with the invention and more or less common use of the girdle of chastity. Diderot calls it the Florentine tool. Voltaire believes that it is in general use at Rome and Venice. Saint-Amand also says that, in his time, most Roman ladies used to wear drawers or trowsers [*sic*] of iron (40–41).

Bonneau vacillates between excessive credulity and highly critical perspectives. On the one hand he assumes that a passage in Rabelais's *Pantagruel* (III, XXVI) with a specific mentioning of a chastity belt—"take me then with him, if I don't buckle my wife in the Bergamask fashion, when I go out from my seraglio!" (43)—could serve as proof of its historical existence. But then he notices that many French authors refer to the Italian practice of applying

chastity belts to their wives' bodies, such as Count de Bonneval's *Memoirs*, and these accounts seem highly "apocryphal" (44) to him. Then he discovers that not one fifteenth- or sixteenth-century Italian author ever refers to a chastity belt (44), which puzzles him to no end. He only finds a way out of this dilemma when he cites from Abbé Brantôme's account about a pedlar who sold chastity belts at the fair of Saint German. Unfortunately for Bonneau, even Brantôme undermined the trustworthiness of this account when he illustrated how one lady quickly got out of the painful situation by having the locksmith make a duplicate of the key. The locksmith in turn cuckolded the husband, whereas other male members of the court threatened the pedlar with death if he did not throw away his remaining girdles. Brantôme even concludes, "And he was never talked of since, which was very wise of him, as it was enough to have half the world lost, for want of peopling it, by binding nature with such bridles, locks and clasps, the abominable and hateful enemies of the multiplication of mankind."[78] The irony is unmistakable, so we have to conclude that for Brantôme himself the idea of a chastity belt was an absurdity, and he included the account primarily because of the ridiculous nature of this gadget. Did Bonneau realize this aspect in his discussion of this passage in the *Vie des Dames galantes*? The caption for a figure might indicate this, as it says: "With this figure, things grow rather more complicated. An ideal protection against cold weather, truly, but there are other methods of gaining warmth. . .The sages have answered that, like other inventions of the devil, it is to lure men to their destruction. After looking at the illustration again, we cannot doubt the truth of that remark" (47). The discussion of a passage in a poem by Guillaume de Machault, to which I will return later myself, leaves much to wonder, especially as Bonneau himself comments, "we can still interpret these passages in quite an allegorical and immaterial sense, sufficiently conformable [*sic*]to the refined symbolism of Cupid's faithful" (52).

Sixteenth- through eighteenth-century literature contains a number of additional references to the chastity belt, such as Monsieur Niel's *Portraits du XVIe siècle*, which contains a satirical picture which bears the title: "Du coqu qui porte la clef et sa femme la serrure" (Of the cuckold who carries the key and his wife the lock). And Tallemant des Réaux included the motif of the chastity belt in his 345th novella. Finally, Madame de Sévigné is also claimed to have thematized the chastity belt in her account of Duc de Ventadour's measures to protect his beautiful young wife from the many wooers. But Bonneau reaches quite a different conclusion regarding the interpretation of this passage, quoting the relevant passage from the poet's own text: "Madame Cornuel says that the Duc de Ventradour has put a good porter at his door. . .by giving his poor wife a fine disease" (59–60).

Although Bonneau ultimately concludes that "Girdles of chastity were not, then, of such rare use as we might be tempted to believe at first sight" (60), the evidence assembled proves to be highly questionable, especially because Bonneau himself is the first to question their validity and regularly observes their rather satirical nature.

Myth-Making Stage II: Dr. Caufeynon (1904 and 1905)

Although the common notion of the chastity belt assigned it to the Middle Ages, especially relating it to the Crusades, Caufeynon resolutely rejects this and identifies this object as the result of Renaissance inventiveness. Only one literary text, Guillaume de Machaut's literary letter to Agnès de Navarre, might suggest that it had existed already in earlier times.[79] Nevertheless, he expresses his astonishment at the large number of surviving specimens in many French museums, such as in Sens, Montauban, Rennes, Tours, Poitiers, and Paris collections which alone are said to own up to seventeen examples, though he also suspects that many of them might have been falsifications. Caufeynon constantly vacillates between a critical approach and naive acceptance of the myth. Whereas he leans toward questioning the authenticity of many museum pieces, he simply assumes that chastity belts had always been a matter of necessity because of women's frailty, seductiveness, and lack of self-discipline: "la fragilité féminine est chose si notoire depuis Eve et l'aventure du serpent, qu'en tous temps et en tous pays l'homme s'est ingénié de toutes les façons et quelque fois très cruellement à y porter remède" (15; the female frailty is such a well-known matter since Eve and the adventure with the snake that men at all times and in all countries have invented in all kinds of fashion and sometimes in very cruel manner means to remedy it). Hence, the chastity belt has always been a necessity throughout time, as he believes, adding only that occasionally infibulation was practiced to control male sexuality.

Caufeynon draws extensive evidence for his thesis from the vast field of anthropology, as many other authors following him would do, observing significant parallels between sexual practices, on the one hand, among native peoples in Africa, America, and Asia, and in early-modern Europe, on the other. If the Egyptians and Nubians practice circumcision and infibulation, then it would be most likely, if not even logical, that the chastity belt was indeed used in Europe since the fifteenth century or so.[80]

Many earlier sources referred to Duke Francesco II de Carrara as the first one to have introduced the chastity belt to late-medieval Europe. But all reports, which Caufeynon reviews critically, prove to be unreliable and contradictory, especially with respect to Francesco's alleged torture

instruments and murderous gadgets with which he had allegedly assassinated former concubines among the high nobility. Citing Abbé Misson (*Voyage d'Italie*, I, 112), the author tries to reach firm ground in his argument: "Là encore sont des cadenas et divers ferrements dont cet horrible monstre bouclait ses concubines" (*Voyage d'Italie*, I, 23). There are still the locks and various tools to be seen with which this horrible monster fettered his concubines. But he cannot help but profoundly question this claim, especially since all other sources relevant for the history of Francesco do not confirm this at all (27–29).[81] Nevertheless, the chastity belt must have come from somewhere, and since it is often nicknamed as "Italian belt,": "Tout le monde est d'accord, chez nous en moins, pour rejeter en Italie, l'invention et l'usage des ceintures de chasteté" (36; The entire world is in agreement, at least among us, to attribute the invention and use of the chastity belt to Italy).

In his subsequent investigations Caufeynon badly confuses medieval with Renaissance sources, misjudges relevant texts such as Guillaume de Machaut's poem and misspells Marie de France's "Guigemar" (as "Guyemer," 41–42). Moreover, most of his references pertain to the eighteenth century (Voltaire), whereas the numerous photos and drawings illustrating his slim volume show nothing but women wearing clearly modern specimens of chastity belts. From a historical and cultural perspective, there is no noteworthy scholarly value to Caufeynon's book, but it obviously deeply influenced subsequent writers over the next few decades who closely modeled their investigations on the evidence collected by him. Not surprisingly, the sexual nature of the topic made it possible that his study was even reprinted in 1993 and 2000, which testifies to the enormous impact which the myth of the chastity belt has had on modern imagination in the French-speaking area.[82] Considering Caufeynon's intensive research on many other related topics, such as female sexuality, sexual perversions, the use and effects of drugs, virginity, conjugal love, sexual diseases, children's hygiene, prostitution, pederasty, and hysteria,[83] it is small wonder that he also dedicated a book-length study to this curious topic, obviously without any serious historical training. But myth-makers normally prove to be lay authors who manage to appeal to their audience particularly because of their lack of critical acumen and their ability to offer salacious, mysterious, and exciting reading material, seemingly cloaked with all the trappings traditional scholarship requires, without, however, bothering with authentication, verification, and falsification. This certainly applies to Bonneau and Caufeynon, and to the next two writers.

Myth-Making Stage III: Eric John Dingwall (1923)

Dingwall's monograph, the only one of its kind published in the twentieth century, but still ignored by Bonneau, was first printed by Divan in Paris in 1923, with the subtitle *A Medico-Historical Study*, then reprinted by Routledge in London in 1931, subsequently in 1959 by Dover in New York, and then once more in 1992 by the Dorset Press in New York. The 1959 edition appeared with an altered subtitle, this one reading *A Fascinating History of Chastity Belts*, which the last edition dropped altogether.[84]

Citing numerous famous research libraries where he had received help, Dingwall establishes his scholarly authority already in the preface, before he turns to his actual topic. In fact, the author offers an impressive investigation that could stand up to rigorous examinations even today, insofar as he provides exact citations, discusses a wide range of literary and historical examples, and offers photos of concrete chastity belts that he had found in numerous European museums and in medieval manuscript illustrations.

Dingwall does not ask whether chastity belts actually existed; instead he simply investigates when they were introduced into Europe, by whom, and how the belt was used concretely and for what purposes. He offers the following summary: "Hence it can be concluded that the girdle of chastity is a device which has been used in the past and may be still used to-day; that it consists of varied forms and diverse types, and that its object is the same wherever it is employed, namely the external control of the *pudendum muliebre* and adjacent regions for the prevention of illicit intercourse and auto-erotic satisfaction, and also for preventing illegitimate children" (163).

Deeply convinced that he is dealing with a device that has been in use among many different cultures all over the world and throughout time, he expresses his amazement that such a contraption had ever been invented: "There can be little doubt that the imposition of chastity belts upon women in order to allay masculine jealousy, and the operation of infibulation upon male slaves by their mistresses for the sake of lust, are two of the most remarkable customs ever devised by mankind in its efforts to control the intricacies of the erotic life" (164).

It goes without saying that we progress in our knowledge by examination, study, and criticism, without ever fully accepting as absolute truth what previous scholars or writers had to say about a topic. Most difficult, however, prove to be mythical concepts and ideas, especially if they are colported in many standard lexica, handbooks, encyclopedias, and other reference works, which are based on the general assumption of factual trustworthiness. This difficulty arises from the generic approach they take,

stating assumptions and impressions as facts and closing any gap that might allow an inquisitive mind to enter. This also applies to the many myths about the medieval world that circulate in people's minds.

Since chastity belts seem to be so exceedingly popular particularly today, both as a topic in pseudo-scientific literature and as a sex paraphernalia, and particularly as one of the most salacious icons of alleged sexual practices in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, it seems appropriate to go over Dingwall's evidence once again and reexamine all his sources, as far as they would be of relevance for the Middle Ages, which we then can subject to a thorough critique before we proceed with our investigation of medieval and early-modern texts that might or might not confirm the existence of chastity belts. The fundamental question will be whether we are dealing with modern erotic fantasies or with a concrete but perverse invention resulting from highly disturbing male impotence and anxiety of cuckoldry in the Middle Ages.[85] To be sure, modern fiction writers, such as John Hawkes and Laura Fredericks, and composers of jazz and folk music incorporated the theme of the chastity belt in their works, thus perpetuating a myth even further into the present, assigning it a flair of authenticity.[86]

Dingwall begins with the German proverb: "Gegen der Weiber Untreue helfen weder Riegel noch Schloss,"[87] which translates as: Neither bar nor lock prevent women's disloyalty. But this is too closely related to "hinter Schloß und Riegel bringen" (to put behind lock and bar), which is traditionally used in the context of putting criminals into prison. It might also imply the lock at a chastity belt, but the composite phrase "Riegel noch Schloss" is mostly used in a criminal sense, not at all in the sexual context.[88] Significantly, the proverb mentioned by Dingwall is listed in the major lexicons of proverbs only as pertaining to prisoners, making this citation, as evidence for the chastity belt in the past, rather doubtful.[89] The German term for this object, "Keuschheitsgürtel," does not surface in any proverbial statement, whether medieval or modern.[90] Dingwall also refers to a number of exhibit pieces, and provides photos of some of them, although there is no way of verifying or falsifying their historical authenticity on the basis of his references only.[91] After having mentioned a number of anthropological reports of chastity belts worn by teenage girls in Africa and the Pacific islands, he finally turns to medieval Europe and discusses the *lai* "Guigemar" by Marie de France (14–15). As we will see later, however, to interpret the belt mentioned there as an early version of the chastity belt would be a serious stretch of imagination.

Dingwall (161–62) also refers to Guillaume de Machaut's (early fourteenth century to 1377) *Livre du Voir-Dit* (ca. 1365), a masterpiece of late-medieval love poetry. I will later discuss this *Livre* in greater detail, but let us, at this point, pay close attention to the arguments proposed by

Dingwall and others to cite Machaut's text as a testimony of the existence of chastity belts in the Middle Ages. According to Dingwall, the passage beginning with "Adont la belle m'acola / Et mis son bras à mon col ha" offers certain proof that the poet specifically referred to a specimen of these metal contraptions, although various editors vehemently rejected this interpretation. Bonneau, however, had already indicated the degree to which this poem was to be read satirically. Both the English translation and the subsequent summary as given by Bonneau deserve to be included here, especially because Dingwall does not provide the necessary details and the context fully to understand what is meant by "key" and "lock":

> Then the fair lady hugged me. . .
> So she reached a little key
> Of gold made by a master-hand,
> And said: "This key carry,
> Friend, and keep it safe,
> For it is the key to my treasure.
> I make you lord of it henceforth,
> And above all you shall be master of it,
> And therefore I love it more than my right eye:
> For it is my honor, it is my wealth,
> It is what I can be generous with. . ."

Agnès of Navarre implored the lover not to lose the key of her box because if it were lost she would never have perfect joy again. "For, by God! it shall never be unlocked by any other key but the one you have and it shall be so when you please" (Dingwall 50). Considering the answer he sends her, we can easily recognize the allegorical meaning of both objects: "As to the key I carry of the very rich and gracious treasure, which is in the box, in which all joy, all grace, all sweetness are, doubt not that it shall be very well kept, if God is pleased and I am able. And I shall bring it to you as soon as I can, in order to behold the graces, the glories and the riches of that loving treasure" (50–51).

To believe that Guillaume intended to discuss a chastity belt, whereas both padlock and key almost explicitly refer to female and male genitalia, seems rather naive, though not untypical of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century scholarship. Dingwall, to be sure, was certainly a child of his own time and could not, or did not want to, discriminate enough because of his prudish approach to matters of sexuality. We will see what we have to make out of this intriguing passage in Guillaume's massive poem, but for now let us continue with the review of Dingwall's evidence.

On the other hand, Dingwall underscores the openly erotic nature of many courtly love poems where the female anatomy is described in

unmistakable terms (21–27), but none of them ever refers to a chastity belt. Curiously, he then suddenly admits his own doubts regarding the authenticity of those objects exhibited in museums and elsewhere: "Few, if any, go back to a time anterior to the sixteenth century, and many [of] those on exhibition are, in my opinion at least, not to be considered as genuine" (33).

One of the most important, probably the earliest, illustrations of a chastity belt can be found in Conrad Kyeser's *Bellifortis* (ca. 1405). One of the numerous plates, which are mostly dedicated to war technology, shows a girdle of chastity. The accompanying text reads: "Florentinarium hoc bracile dominarium, ferreum et durum, ab antea sic reseratum." Dingwall comments: "From its appearance the girdle is both clumsy and heavy and has little in common with the later models which served the same purpose" (34). We might suspect that Dingwall was right on target with his analysis, but in a different manner than he intended, because such a belt would have been a monstrosity of contraption no woman would have ever been able to wear, not to speak of the numerous medical problems resulting from such a belt. I will return to Kyeser later in this book, and then in greater detail, but it is worth remembering Dingwall's suspicion about the object's authenticity or realistic nature.

Another contemporary chastity belt was attributed to Francesco, called Novello Carrara, Francesco II of the Carrara family, the tyrant of Padua who was executed in 1406 for political reasons. Among his personal properties were allegedly found many torture instruments, and also a chastity belt, which has been on display in the small Sale d'Armi in the ducal palace ever since (Dingwall 35–36).

But the evidence for its historical origin (medieval or Renaissance) is slim. On the one hand Dingwall reports that many travelers had seen it, but "many of the most observant critics either did not visit the small armoury, or, if they did so, failed to remark upon the girdle which was on exhibition there" (36). One of them was B. G. de Liverdys (*Journal d'un voyage de France et d'Italie*, Paris 1667, 828–29), but he had nothing to say about any chastity belt allegedly on display there.

But Dingwall quotes François Maximilien Misson (*A New Voyage to Italy*, London 1695, 1, 169), who reports of his visit there: "ibi etiam sunt serae, et varia repagula, quibis turpe illud Monstrum, pellices suas occludebat" (39; there are also padlocks, and various bolts, with which this monster locked his mistresses), which means, for Dingwall, that he "is referring to the girdle of chastity" (40). Undoubtedly, Dingwall did not study his source, Bonneau's book, thoroughly enough, and quickly jumped to a number of conclusions that would have a tremendous impact on future readers, although the basis for these claims prove to be highly suspect.

Another source: C. F. Einckel, or: C. F. Neickelius, *Museographia* (Leipzig and Breslau, 1727), 119, offers the following information regarding this alleged chastity belt from Padua: "Schloss, welches dieses Monstrum seiner Gemahlin vor die Natur gemacht" (here 40; a lock which this monster (of a husband) had placed in front of her nature [pudenda]).[92] This might indicate that the duke indeed had invented a device to torture women, and which might have looked like the traditional chastity belt, as drawn by Kyeser, but there is no indication as to what actual purpose this instrument might have had. If torture, then it would not comply with the definition of a chastity belt, and if the mechanical enforcement of chastity was the basic idea, then it was not a mechanism to exert torture.

At any rate, all previously mentioned authors—and so Dingwall as well—agree on the perversity of this tyrant of Padua and characterize him as extraordinarily evil, hence the assumption that he might have used chastity belts, perhaps as torture instruments. In reality, however, this object appeared to be highly exceptional and entirely new to all those interested in chastity belts. This case then could not represent a traditional practice in the way how husbands treated their wives in the premodern world. We will also see that the charge against this tyrant (Francesco II) of having been a sort of medieval Marquis de Sade proves to be highly speculative, if not simply the result of effective propaganda on the part of his Venetian opponents.

Similarly, C. de Brosses, *Lettres familières* (Paris: 1858), Letter no. XVI, 137, confirms the existence of this girdle in this Venetian collection, which he calls "machine odieuse"(hideous contraption) and which Carrara had used "pour mettre en sûreté l'honneur de sa femme" (in order to safeguard his wife's honor). It might be quite indicative of the rigor lacking in all this "scholarly" writing that some assume that Francesco used the chastity belt for his wife, whereas others believe that he applied it to his concubines. But the evidence is weakened by de Brosses's sarcastic comment: "il falloit que cette femme eût bien de l'honneur, car la serrure est diablement large" (137; this woman must have preserved her honor well because the lock was devilishly large).

According to Dingwall, the Duke of Carrara seems to have played a key role in the creation of the myth of the chastity belt, if we consider that so many later encyclopedists referred to him, whether fleetingly or in greater detail. But since there is so little information available to confirm the existence of chastity belts in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, Dingwall extensively culls data from general reference works, and so easily closes the hermeneutic circle without any further need to corroborate his historical conclusions.

In light of the contradictory statements, or lack of any reference to this girdle in later travelogues dealing with Venice, the author reaches

the significant conclusion: "From the above remarks it will be seen that the Carrara *legend* (my emphasis) has persisted down the centuries, and how there does not seem to have been any good evidence to support it. . .the story of their invention [girdle and other torture instruments] by Carrara arose on account of the hatred of the Venetians for him and of the stories of barbarism which were inseparably linked with his memory" (43). This opinion can be easily supported, but it somewhat flies in the face of Dingwall's own arguments and responses to the spurious claims by previous authors regarding the belt kept on display in the ducal palace of Venice.

Other important sources for the chastity belt can be found in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Dingwall cites, among other writers, Abbé de Brantôme. In his *Les Vies des Dames galantes* (*Oeuvres complètes*, vol. IX, 133–34), he reports of the introduction of the girdle into France at the time of King Henry II. But insofar as the Abbé was not a scholar, not even by a long stretch of our imagination, his account can hardly claim to be a trustworthy narrative. The same observation applies to Jean Buvat in his *Journal de la Régence* (1715–23), 2 vols. (Paris: 1845), ii, 28–29. H. N. Williams, *Henri II, His Court and Times* (London: 1910), 309, alleges that Henry II used a girdle for Catherine de Medici, but its large size demonstrates the incorrectness of the report (50, n. 1).

Moreover, Dingwall refers to the 1572 Basel edition of Sebastian Brant's *Narrenschiff* (orig. 1492), or: *Stvltifera Navis mortalivm*, chapter XXXII: "De custodia mulierum."[93] The woodcut shows a woman with such a belt, but only in this edition (52–53): "Girt about her waist is a belt and in her left hand she holds a chain from which is suspended a stout padlock, whilst just beyond the curtain is another fool brandishing a staff at some locusts. On a slope in the background to the left another naked girl is lying" (53). In reality, however, the setting does not allow such an easy interpretation, since she is sitting on a wooden bench all by herself inside a tent, while a man outside holds a lance. It might well be a toilet, especially because a fool on the left, outside of the tent, empties a bucket into a well. One could, indeed, assume, as Dingwall does, that the object that she holds in her left hand might be a padlock, but the woodcut does not make this clear enough. We cannot even tell whether she wears a belt or some kind of underwear. The design is so crude that any specific iconographic interpretation seems to be almost impossible, and certainly does not allow us to read this scene as an illustration of a chastity belt. However, a tiny object lying on the floor in front of the sitting woman might be a key, but the topic of this chapter—the impossibility of controlling women ("uxor si uolet esse procaxs [*sic*]," v. 12)—and the fact that both woman are naked strongly suggests a purely satirical meaning, offering an association of female unruliness and male foolishness.

Subsequently Dingwall refers to C. de Boissieu, *Interméd. d. cherch. et cur.*, 1901, xliv, 429—I could neither verify the author's name nor the book title—who had claimed that many museums in France had specimens on display, but Dingwall could not confirm this at all. As to Rennes, for example, he emphasizes: "I cannot find any trace of a girdle of chastity in the pages of the museum catalogue" (72). According to Boissieu, there were 200 such objects, but only two from the time prior to the Renaissance. Dingwall's comment reveals the crux of his own research: "personally I know of no single specimen which can be dated with any degree of certainty as earlier than this" (73).

Overall, and quite remarkably, Dingwall questions the girdle's authenticity as an object which jealous husbands used to protect their wives' chastity during the Middle Ages: "From the accounts of a few selected specimens of girdles of chastity which have been given above, it will be seen that no good evidence has been adduced that these objects were ever in actual use by the women of the different periods" (84). Characteristically, Dingwall knows primarily of early-modern examples, such as when he mentions Ole Worm (middle of the seventeenth century) who reported of a conflict between husband and wife, which resulted in him forcing her to wear the belt. At the end, her friends protested against this grotesque physical abuse, and the court ordered the husband to have the belt removed (93–94).[94] Then there was a court case in 1750 dealing with a similar problem between husband and wife (95–97). In 1881 the novel *La Ceinture de Chasteté*, by J. Cazanova, a pseudonym, appeared in print, but it was banned in 1884 because of its allegedly obscene nature.

For our purposes, however, the chastity belt as a literary motif of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literature has no bearing whatsoever on the quest for the authenticity of the object itself as an invention of the late Middle Ages or early-modern period. Nevertheless, in light of the fact that the chastity belt had become a literary motif we may conclude that it had assumed a mythical character and was definitely moved out of the realm of historical verifiability.

Myth-Making Stage IV: Esar Levine (1931)

Although having published his study on *Chastity Belts* (1931) twenty-six years after Caufeynon's book and nine years after Dingwall's monograph, Esar Levine[95] still entirely ignores his forerunners, and instead mostly turns to anecdotal, literary examples, beginning with the tale "The Use of Dirty Water," contained in the *Les Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* (1462), composed by Antoine de la Sale (1399–1464). As so often in medieval and Renaissance erotic literature, the narrative focus rests on the theme of adultery, that is,

on the cunning young wife of an old and jealous husband, who is eventually cuckolded by a knight. But all possible references to a chastity belt are missing, and we are reminded of Levine's original purpose of writing this book: "I have borne in mind one purpose above all others: to make it an interesting, readable book."[96] Nevertheless, Levine offers a wealth of entertaining literary material, and also includes numerous illustrations of actual chastity belts, though he insists that this strange apparatus was not invented in the Middle Ages. Instead, this "impregnable contrivance to insure a wife's fidelity was an early Renaissance invention" (28–29).[97] But already in his discussion of the specimen held in the Musée de Cluny (Paris) he resorts to the formulation: "legend, quite common in France" (30), while explaining its possible provenance from King Henry II who forced his wife Catherine de Medici to wear it. Levine can be credited with elaborating on his topic in a most stylish fashion, so when he comments on the various museum exhibit pieces which "will convince the discerning reader that this practice of higher malthusianism was not an uncommon one in Europe during medieval and Renaissance days" (58).

Unfortunately, his evidence even for the Renaissance proves to be dangerously thin, especially when he quickly turns to the eighteenth century and cites Voltaire as proof for the existence of chastity belts (58–59). He explains this desperate move by admitting that even one of the most likely sources to provide concrete evidence, Marguerite de Navarre's sixteenth-century *Heptaméron*, does not include any allusion to such a contraption (65).[98] The subsequent discussion of Guillaume de Machault's allegorical love romance in verse, *Voir Dit*, so popular among all those who scour the literary history of the Middle Ages for any reference to a key or a belt, does not result in any firm proof at all, especially since Guillaume, as I will discuss later, uses the motif of the key only in an allegorical sense.

The reference to a historical novel by Louis Latourette—neither title nor date could be determined, though it was certainly a satirical eighteenth- or nineteenth-century publication—demonstrates how much the myth of the chastity belt was recognized as such, a myth that could be laughed at. The male protagonist returns home from the Crusade, but he has lost the key to his wife's chastity belt, and no locksmith can be found who would be able to create a duplicate: "Thus was Violaine condemned to eternal chastity and imprisonment" (74). Returning to the Renaissance, Levine cites Rabelais's *Pantagruel*, but he himself remains doubtful as to the validity of this satirical novel for the confirmation of the historicity of the chastity belt.

The author concludes "that the chastity belt was of the extremist rarity in France during the sixteenth century" (79). Albeit he has to admit defeat in his efforts to verify this mythical object, he courageously, or rather incorrigibly, returns to art-historical evidence, such as a satirical etching included in

Niel's *Portraits du XVIe siècle* with the title "Du coqu qui porte la clef et sa femme la serrure" (Of the cuckold who carries the key and his wife the lock) (80–81, illustration on p. 273). Yet Levine is candid enough to comment: "Wherever we find the chastity belt discussed we are almost certain to find some comment to the effect that it was a futile precaution" (81–82). This is confirmed by numerous themes in epigrammatic writing (Marot) and early-modern woodcuts, but the author seems to ignore his own warning and entirely misunderstands the nature of satire because he is swayed by the pictorial evidence, such as in the woodcuts and in the report by Abbé Misson about the tyrant of Padua (Francesco II), accompanied by an illustration in a German codex from 1405 (Kyeser).

Levine knows nothing more about these references than his forerunners, and actually reveals his deplorable ignorance concerning authorship and some of the historical context, but the combination of his loose narrative summary with the illustrations, such as Melchior Schedel's *ex libris* (bookplates) from 1560 conveys, though deceptively, a sense of trustworthiness. Here as well, a nude woman stands on the left side of a coat of arms (from the viewer's perspective), holding a bag of money above her head, which is covered with an elegant gear, while in her right hand she grasps an enormous key which is "out of all proportion to the size of the lock which secures her chastity belt. A cross has been cut into the key for some inexplicable reason" (88–91). Again, the satirical nature of this illustration is so blatantly obvious that one can only wonder why Levine, and other authors before and after him ever took this motif as proof for the existence and/or practical application of the girdle of chastity. After all, the armored man standing to the right side does not make a very serious impression either, with one leg clad in iron, whereas the other is naked. The right side of his body is covered in courtly clothing, apart from the leg, and he has four feathers attached to his helmet, which altogether seems to suggest a certain self-irony, if Melchior intended to create a self-portrait here. The heads of two black children adorn this *ex libris*, the one on the central shield, the other on top of the helmet, surrounded by two mighty horns. A scroll at the head of the scene contains a sentence in German: "Es Mag Passiern" (It might happen), which clearly signals the erotic and humorous nature of the entire ensemble.

Surprisingly, in his subsequent discussions Levine energetically dismisses the notion that the chastity belt might have been introduced to Europe during the Middle Ages; instead he suggests that its true purpose, once having been invented sometime during the Renaissance, might have served as a form of punishment of unfaithful wives: "The chastity belt was, therefore, a natural product of the Renaissance, too ingenious for the middle ages and not cruel enough a punishment for so heinous a crime as marital infidelity" (106).

Why would it then have been more adequate, or probable, for early-modern husbands enraged over their wives' acts of adultery to resort to the chastity belt, as Levine argues (106)? Historians, on the other hand, who dare to question the authenticity of actual specimens, are decried as "[m]isguided." And: "Others still more ignorant, but with the cocksureness of the uninformed, declare that chastity belts were solely used as instruments for surgical purposes" (137). This is adding insult to injury, without having any proof in the first place! But Levine then refers his readers to the duke of Padua, Francesco II (Novellino), who "is said to have employed such belts on his mistresses" (138). This allegation proves to be nothing but a rumored legend, as Levine grants himself, albeit he then jumps to the conclusion: "this anecdote of Francis II of Carrara gives us our first, definite historic knowledge of chastity belts, authentic if not in all its details, at least in the incontestable fact that the instrument did really exist before the fifteenth century" (140). An anecdote it was, but nothing else, as I will demonstrate later in greater detail.

The corollary is as unfounded as can be, but it certainly reveals the basic strategy to guarantee that the myth-making process progresses: state the unfounded, argue that it is solidly proven, and vehemently condemn any critic who might question the basis for the generic claim. The reason why Levine does not adduce more concrete evidence for his argument consists of the predominant puritanism in the United States, which would prohibit him "from citing a number of proofs of an indirect nature which would go far to prove the existence of chastity belts as a definite, though dispersive, institution during the past five hundred years" (148). The subsequent, still quite lengthy discussion continues in the same vein and does not yield any further evidence, except for repetitions and reparaphrases of earlier arguments. But we can at least give Levine some credit for a fairly sober assessment of his own investigations. Referring to Rabelais's *Pantagruel*, for instance, he admits: "Even Rabelais' solitary reference in the mouth of Panurge proves that the greatest humorist of them all knew but little of the existence of these instruments, and that little only from hearsay" (243).

As to the situation in England, we learn: "And Shakespeare, infinitely curious in all sexual matters, would surely have mentioned them if they had been known in his day in London. . . . [His] silence is of convincing significance" (244). Thomas Middleton's comedies might represent an exception to the rule, but again we would only face satirical elements, not historical truth. Most interestingly, however, Levine ultimately explains the reasons for having written this book. He is not so blind as not to realize for himself that even in Renaissance France the chastity belt "must have been unknown generally" (245). Nevertheless, the "bridling of women" represents a vicious form of double standards in public morality. Discarding

all his own doubts and rushing into the finale of his "fact finding mission," Levine bitterly laments the criminal treatment of women in the past and compares the idea of the chastity belt with modern means of suppressing women: "The pitiless cruelty of a chastity belt has been relegated to a criminal past but our women still wear the invisible belt of chastity, such as our savage laws against birth control and some of our hypocritical laws against divorce. Let the asses censor and the fools prohibit!" (246).

Myth-Making Stage V: Lexica, Encyclopedia, and other Reference Works

Bonneau, Caufeynon, Dingwall, and Levine were certainly not the only ones to pursue an interest in this most curious instrument to discipline wives: the chastity belt. Both medievalists and cultural historians, both journalists and writers of popular reference works have been fixated on the chastity belt as an object of fascination, sexual titillation, and simple curiosity, basically serving as a sensational indicator of the remarkable differences between modernity and the medieval past. The following section will not be concerned with the question of whether chastity belts historically existed, but with the history of scholarship and the emergence of a public discourse based on and promoted by authoritative voices that claimed to summarize the standard level of knowledge about the past and the present, here focusing on the chastity belt again.

Early German Encylopedists

Early encyclopedists had considerable interest in the chastity belt and also discussed its historical veracity. One of the first and also highly authoritative voice was Johann Heinrich Zedler who published one of the most comprehensive encyclopedias of his time in 64 hefty volumes between 1732 and, posthumously, 1763. In volume six, published in 1733, he comments on the chastity belt, but refers to it only in Latin, as "Cingulum Pudicitiae," whereas an entry in German ("Keuschheitsgürtel") is absent. According to Zedler, the chastity belt is "ein Band, welcher denen untreuen Weibern angelegt wird, damit sie mit keinem andern den Beyschlaf exerciren koennen" (a belt which is applied to these disloyal women so that they cannot carry out copulation with another man). He only refers to one source, Olaus Wormius (*Museo*, 389), but he seriously questioned the veracity of this account: "Ob aber dieses ein allzu gewisses Schloß abgebe ? ist billig zu zweifeln, weil sie es durch Veränderung der Positur leicht eludiren können" (But it seems questionable whether this padlock would truly provide security because they [women] could easily escape from it through a change of the position).[99]

Figure 4 Hanns Schell Collection, Graz, Austria
(same as Figure 2, but with a closed lid)

This sober and critical position did not find many friends, as subsequent encyclopedists revealed. For instance, we come across an extensive treatment of chastity and the relevant paraphernalia and strategies to preserve and protect female chastity throughout world history in Johann Georg Krünitz' *Oekonomische Enzyclopaedie, oder allgemeines System der*

Land= Haus= und Staats-Wirthschaft, in alphabetischer Ordnung (Berlin: Joachim Pauli, 1786; Economic Encyclopedia, or General System of the Land, House, and State Economy, Alphabetically Arranged).[100] At one point he also refers to the Duke of Carrara, but only after a lengthy discussion of the nature of chastity and the various approaches to maintain it in moral, ethical, religious, and social terms. He then turns to the practical and mechanical strategies to achieve this goal.[101] In Mongolia, as he states, women are protected in a kind of cage when they travel over land, or are accompanied by a troupe of eunuchs and soldiers. All over Asia and in parts of Africa this would be the common practice as well, where eunuchs serve as the most important players in the official protection of women's chastity, because they are, due to their castration, incapable of raping women. In Italy, on the other hand, they use, as Krünitz assures us, chastity belts: "In Italien ist ein gewisses Schloß der Keuschheit bekannt, womit man die Keuschheit der Weiber in Sicherheit zu setzen vermeint" (191; in Italy they use a certain padlock of chastity with which they believe to guarantee women's chastity). The inventor is identified as the tyrant of Padua, Alexius [*sic*!] Carrara.[102]

Chastity belts were allegedly also employed in Spain, but Krünitz explains the curious praxis with a reference to the Spaniards' origin from Africa (!). Since the Spaniards are as jealous as their African forefathers, they "machten, verschiedene Jahrhunderte hindurch, von solchen Haenge=Schloessern Gebrauch" (191; they used such padlocks for several centuries). Hilariously, Krünitz then observes that the Spaniards found the chastity belt to be insufficient for their purposes and resorted instead to the employment of old women, known as "Duegnas" (191), who had to protect wives' chastity and morality. Subsequently the author mentions a ridiculous strategy used by a tribe in central Africa to scare women through the appearance of a puppet in which a man is hidden who threatens the women with foolish words and gestures. More important, according to Krünitz, "Beynahe in allen Laendern, wo die weibliche Keuschheit ein wichtiger Gegenstand gewesen ist, hat man irgend eine Methode ersonnen, um die Unenthaltsamen mit Furcht zu erfullen (*sic*), und diejenigen, die ihre Tugend bewahren, mit sußen (*sic*) Hoffnungen zu beleben" (193; Almost in every country where chastity has been an important subject matter, they invented a method to fill those who break their chastity vows with fear, and to inspire those, who preserve their virtues, with sweet hope). But Krünitz also discusses the horrible practice of female circumcision, though he only knows of the method of locking both labia together with a ring or to sew both lips together so that the vagina has to be cut open once the young woman has married.

The other practice consists of locking the labia with a ring: "und die verheuratheten Frauen sowohl, als auch die Jungfrauen, sind dieser

Beschimpfung unterworfen, nur mit dem Unterschiede, daß der Ring, welchen letztere tragen, nicht abgenommen werden kann, und daß der Ring der Frauen eine Art von Schloß hat, zu welchem der Mann den Schluessel fuehrt. Dieser Gebrauch ist fast in allen Theilen von Arabien herrschend" (194; and the married women and the virgins are subject to this demeaning treatment, only with the difference that the ring that is worn by the latter cannot be removed and that the women's ring has a kind of lock for which the husband has the key. This practice is dominant in almost all parts of Arabia).

Krünitz relies primarily on a global anthropological approach, on reports of sensational practices in distant regions of the world, and makes many mistakes, especially when he identifies the Spaniards as originally descending from Africans. Undoubtedly, his understanding of the history of chastity belts would be most untrustworthy today, but at his time he obviously exerted tremendous authority and confirms the existence of chastity belts both in the past and in the present without offering any specific evidence. Even the mentioning of the chastity belt as an invention of the tyrant of Padua remains highly vague, which is, of course, not surprising for an eighteenth-century encyclopedia. We observe, however, the origin of the myth concerning the chastity belt, being deeply anchored in male chauvinism, fear of women's unruliness and transgression of chastity vows. For Krünitz, the ethnographic references serve as reliable corroborative evidence that the chastity belt existed in medieval and early-modern Europe as well. The rather nebulous and vague discussion of this instrument for male control of women's chastity indicates the method used to establish the myth.

Practically every author of encyclopedias and similar handbooks draws most of his material from previous reference works—as far as I can tell, there were no female encyclopedists, if women ever discussed the chastity belt prior to the emergence of feminism. This global observation also applies to Krünitz, as his discussion of the chastity belt was in part directly lifted from Johann Theodor Jablonsky's *Allgemeines Lexicon der Kuenste und Wissenschaften* (1767).[103] Jablonsky includes only a short article on chastity at large and mostly limits himself to the basic methods on how an individual can protect him/herself from transgressing the ideal of chastity: "Keuschheit, Castitas, eine Tugend, welche die Reinigkeit und Zucht bewahret, und die natuerliche Leibeslust maeßiget" (Chastity, a virtue which protects purity and discipline, and reduces the natural bodily lustfulness). For him, chastity proves to be highest virtue, equal to life itself, if not to be preferred over it, though suicide to protect one's chastity would not be laudable. Moralists consider the killing of a man who is trying to rape a woman as justified. Then Jablonsky turns to the

chastity belt and formulates a sentence which is, word for word, the same which Krünitz used, who obviously must have been familiar with Jablonsky's work: "In Italien ist ein gewisses Schloß der Keuschheit bekannt, womit man die Weiber zu verwahren vermeynet, und dessen erster Erfinder der letzte Tyrann von Padua, Alexius Carrara, gewesen" (In Italy the use of a certain chastity belt is known with which they believe to be able to protect women, and whose first inventor was the last tyrant of Padua, Alexius Carrara). No other explanation is given, and Jablonsky quickly drops the topic and turns to morality among the Romans and to the visual motif of the allegory of chastity. Insofar as there is no further mention of this curious gadget, we might conclude that the author harbored rather limited interest in the concrete sexual practices in past and present societies.

Adultery ("Ehebruch"), for instance, is discussed only briefly, and the author basically underscores that it would be punished with the death penalty (390–91), though it would be extremely difficult to convict someone of having committed adultery.

The Chastity Belt in Ersch's and Gruber's Encyclopedia

The famous *Allgemeine Encycklopaedie der Wissenschaften und Kuenste* by J. S. Ersch and J. G. Gruber, the first volumes of which were printed in 1818—it was never completed—does not include a separate entry on the chastity belt, but it nevertheless offers a discussion of its function within a lengthy chapter on "Galanterie" (courtly gallantry).[104] Ferdinand Wachter examines in minute detail the wide spectrum of chivalry and courtly behavior characterizing the relationship between men and women throughout the Middle Ages and beyond. At one point, after having described courtly love as one of the most important and far-reaching features of medieval gallantry and hence of public culture represented by the aristocracy, he suddenly emphasizes that in the late Middle Ages courtly ladies had given in too much to adulterous love and had lost their honor. This required them to accept the most undignifying contraption ever invented, the chastity belt: "Da die Sitte die eheliche Treue nicht schuetzte, so mußten die Frauen, da sie sich selbst entwürdiget hatten, das entwuerdigendste Mittel dulden, sie vor der Verletzung der ehelichen Treue zu bewahren" (284; Since public morality did not protect conjugal loyalty, women had to tolerate, as a consequence of the loss of their own dignity, the most undignifying means to prevent them from transgressing conjugal loyalty).

Wachter once again attributes the invention of the chastity belt to Alexius Carrara, [*sic*!], the last tyrant of Padua, and emphasizes that this apparatus was the beginning of the end of gallantry in Italy. With the help

Figure 5 Hanns Schell Collection, Graz, Austria, Keuschheitsgürtel-1

of the chastity belt the institution of "Cicisbeatura" became possible, which was the publicly accepted arrangement of a romantic relationship between a nobleman with a married lady.[105] The husband knew that his wife could not enter into a sexual relationship with her lover, hence the playful wooing could be accepted as a public performance without any specific consequences for the husband's honor. Nevertheless, the chastity belt brought about the downfall of courtly love: "Da die Galanterie durch diese grausame, aber in Ruecksicht der herrschenden Sittenlosigkeit gerechte Strafe den Todesstoß erhielt, so suchte man doch noch den Schein der Galanterie zu retten, und als Rest derselben blieb das Cicisbeat" (284; Since gallantry received its mortal strike through this cruel, but in light of the general loss of morality, justified punishment, people tried to maintain the appearance of gallantry, which led to the Cicisbeat).

In Spain as well, the chastity belt was, as Wachter underscores, widely applied, but he does not provide any evidence and projects, perhaps typically for a German author, the world of these two Mediterranean countries as morally suspect and extremely fixated on an outdated honor system derived

from medieval chivalry. Nevertheless, since he wrote his article as an entry for the highly reputable *Allgemeine Encycklopaedie der Wissenschaften und Kuenste*, his claims must have exerted considerable influence and so could contribute to the firm establishment of the myth of the chastity belt as a matter of fact, introduced sometime at the end of the Middle Ages as an apparatus to maintain the traditional concept of playful erotic performance, gallantry without any serious consequences for the propriety of married life.

The Cultural Historian Alwin Schultz (1838–1909)

The well-known cultural historian Alwin Schultz, in many respects thoroughly trustworthy in his profound and extensive knowledge of the culture of everyday life in the Middle Ages, particularly demonstrated in his seminal study *Das höfische Leben zur Zeit der Minnesinger* (1889; Life at the Court during the Time of the Courtly Love Poets), voiced some doubts regarding the historical value of sermons and other public comments about people's morality from the Middle Ages and questioned the authors' true intentions with their disreputable reports.[106] Medieval preachers mostly intended to achieve their purpose of scandalizing particular aspects of people's behavior through exaggeration. Of course, this does not mean that they had no basis to criticize their parishioners. On the other hand, as Schultz also emphasizes, every account of a scandal indicates that it was exceptional, insofar as daily, or routine, events would not have been reported.[107] But despite his fairly sober and realistic approach to his sources, Schultz does not hesitate to discuss chastity belts as a historical matter of fact, immediately referring to the alleged example in Marie de France's "Guigemar" (595). He also mentions the illustration in Konrad Kyeser's *Bellifortis* and the example of an actual chastity belt in the *Museum schlesischer Alterthümer zu Breslau* (today Wrocław). As we will see, none of these references bear any evidentiary quality, but they belonged to the standard tools in the hands of all myth-makers, at least those who focused on the chastity belt.

Beyond these few comments, Schultz refrains from discussing the issue any further, obviously convinced that he has proven his point.[108] But his methodological approach deserves some closer attention because he heavily relies on seventeenth- and eighteenth-century writers: "Keuschheitsgürtel (cingula castitatis), die von späteren Schriftstellern wie Nic. Chorier in der Aloysia Sigaea, Brantôme etc. so häufig erwäehnt werden" (595; chastity belts (cingula castitatis) that were mentioned so often by later authors, such as Nic. Chorier in his *Aloysia Sigaea*, Brantôme, etc.). In other words, Baroque writers, who satirically included references to this curious apparatus, are acknowledged as serious witnesses for an allegedly historically

verifiable object as it was used in the Middle Ages. In his description of the medieval chastity belt, he offers the following comment: "Das Modell eines solchen, sehr roh aus Eisen gearbeitet (die wirklich gebrauchten Gürtel waren aus Gold oder Silber). . ." (595; the model of which, crudely made out of iron [those really used belts were made out of gold or silver]. . .). In other words, Schultz himself does not think that those museum pieces could have actually be worn by medieval women, and simply imagines that the true chastity belts were of quite a different material, hence easier to wear. But no museum or collection owns such an authentic girdle, which profoundly undermines Schultz's argument.

The Anthroplogist Heinrich Ploss (d. 1885)

One of the most influential and highly respected anthropologist, Heinrich Ploss (d. 1885), laid the foundation of the modern myth of the chastity belt through his extensive discussion of this apparatus which served as a mechanism for men to control and suppress their wives' sexuality, in his massive and deeply influential study of *Das Weib in der Natur- und Völkerkunde*, first published in 1884, republished many times thereafter (eighth edition in 1905), and translated numerous times into Russian and English, among other languages (the last English edition appeared in 1984).[109] Ploss emphasizes in the prologue to the first edition how much he was concerned to project a reliable, objective picture of womanhood in the various cultural contexts all over the world: "Denn ich betrachte das Weib in seinem geistigen und körperlichen Wesen mit dem Auge des Anthropologen und Arztes. . . . So darf ich wohl sagen, dass ich die Lebensverhältnisse des Weibes zu einem grossen Theile nach den Anforderungen und Ergebnissen der Ethnologie geschildert habe." (I study woman in her spiritual and physical nature with the eyes of the anthropologist and medical doctor. . . . I dare say that I have studied the living conditions of women to a large extent according to the requirements and results of ethnology).[110] Ploss examines almost every possible aspect of the female physiognomy in the various cultures from a global perspective, including women's aestheticization, sexual organs, internal organs, the social conditions in many different cultures, the function of virginity, prostitution, love making, marriage, fertility, pregnancy, delivery, child nursing, women's social rank, the status of widows, old women, and death of women.

Ploss was ambitious enough not to limit himself to any specific cultural group and historical period. Consequently he develops such universal perspectives, supported with a rich illustration program (lithographs) that there is virtually no room for any possible criticism or effort to verify or falsify his arguments. For instance, he does not hesitate to make such global,

unverifiable claims as: "Auf Tahiti, auf den Gesellschaftsinseln u.s.w. wird der Liebesgenuss als der höchste Reiz des Lebens betrachtet; und die Gesellschaft der Areoïs setzen ihre ganze Lebensaufgabe in die Befriedigung dieses Vergnügens. Ich könnte die Listen dieser zügellosen Sitten noch sehr vergrössern" (I, 407; In Tahiti, on the islands of French Polynesia, and the like, the enjoyment of sexuality is regarded as the highest impetus in life; the society of the Areoï set the satisfaction of this enjoyment as the only and absolute goal of life. I could easily expand the list of these unbridled customs). And with regard to Hawaii, Ploss offers the following comment: "Mädchen von 12–14 Jahren sind in der Regel nicht mehr jungfräulich; Unzucht zwischen Vater und Tochter gehört keineswegs zu den Seltenheiten" (407–08; girls in the age of 12–14 years have mostly lost their virginity; incest between father and daughter is no rarity). Eurocentric perspectives, clearly informed by colonial Orientalism obviously determine Ploss's ideology and immediately alert us to the lack of scholarly foundation of his massive tome, although it finds many admirers even today.[111]

But he also offers a number of comments concerning the chastity belt used all over the world. Jealousy belongs to one of those anthropological constants that have determined the relationship between both genders throughout times, both in "civilized" Europe and among the "uncivilized" peoples. Ploss knows of many mechanical devices that were intended to prevent women's transgression of their chastity. Some African tribes allegedly forced all their women to wear such a contraption whenever they wanted to leave the house. Another practice, mostly in place in the Orient, was to implant a ring into the woman's labia, "um den Introitus vaginae zu verschliessen" (412; to lock the entrance to the vagina). Regarding Eastern Africa, he reports of a type of female circumcision and of sewing together of the vaginal labia. Among the North American Indians a type of chastity belt was in use, as another author had reported.[112]

The anthropologist Ploss next tries to apply his observations about the natives in the various non-European continents to "civilized" Europe, and so he turns to the medieval history when the crusaders allegedly brought with them the chastity belt in order to guarantee their wives' chastity back home during their own long absence. Ploss leaves no doubt, however, that he regards all these practices, whether female circumcision or infibulation, or the employment of the chastity belt, as cruel and barbaric ("barbarische Erfindung," 412; barbaric invention). He cites the well-known, but also worn-out reference to the Duke of Padua, Carrara, who was put on trial and executed for the torturous treatment of his prisoners.[113] Moreover, a French haberdasher was claimed to have offered specimens of chastity belts out of metal during the time of King Henry II, the design of which was called "à la Bergamasque" (412). Ploss, like many writers before him, also

cites Abbé de Brantôme's *Les vies des dames galantes*, committing the traditional error of equating a literary account with a direct reflection of a historically verifiable event or aspect:

> Du temps du roy Henry il y avait un certain quinquailleur, qui apporta une douzaine de certains engins à la foire de Saint Germain pour brider le cas des femmes, qui estoient faicts de fer et ceinturoient comme une centure, et venoient à prendre par le bas et se fermer à clef, si subtilement faicts qu'il n'estoit pas possible que la femme eût ce doulx plaisir, n'ayant que quelques petits trous menus pour servir à pisser" (here 412).
>
> [In the time of King Henry II there was a certain haber-dasher (dealer in a variety of articles) who brought to the fair of Saint Germaine a dozen of certain contraptions intended to bind women's parts which were made of iron and girded like a belt, to be fastened from underneath and locked with a key, so finely made that it was not possible for the woman to have this sweet pleasure. There were only three small holes that allowed her to piss.]

But the merchant was obviously not successful and had to run for his life when the customers realized the true nature of his objects.

Finally, Ploss refers to the specimen of a chastity belt in the Musée de Cluny in Paris, which allegedly shows clear marks of heavy use, seemingly authenticating its historical origin (412).[114] The extent of evidence provided in this massive volume represents the very same offered by Dingwall, who cites from Ploss, but never made an attempt to confirm Ploss's findings through additional sources.

Undoubtedly, Ploss was no historian and did not claim to be one. Nevertheless, he enjoyed tremendous popularity and authority as a sexual anthropologist and ethnographer, which elevated his flimsy references to the medieval chastity belt to the status of historical fact. Subsequent scholars and writers only needed to refer back to Ploss in order to confirm their mythical concepts of medieval methods to control women's chastity, thereby closing an hermeneutical circle which has continued to determine the modern notions of the chastity belt.

But insofar as the idea of the chastity belt had already entered the world of lexica and similar reference works since the eighteenth century, the belief in this myth could no longer be shattered since all authors, including Dingwall, refer more or less to the same, though rather spurious, sources and never make any effort to verify or falsify them in a critical fashion.

The Evidence Produced by A. M. Pachinger

In his 1906 article on mechanical means to prevent sexual intercourse, Friedrich S. Krauss offers in-depth information about his own findings, a survey

of interviews, and reviews of relevant anthropological and ethnographic research.[115] In particular, he summarizes A. M. Pachinger's report of his discovery of a chastity belt, printed in the *Antiquitäten-Rundschau* (Berlin 1904, II, 40ff.). This article is fundamental for our discussion because it is the only one ever to take a close and critical look at Pachinger's findings; moreover, it is the only one that I could find in which Pachinger's own report has been replicated to a large extent. According to Pachinger, chastity belts represent a great rarity and cannot even be found in major museums: "Die Nachfrage dafür ist groß, der Vorrat davon gleich null" (247; the demand is large, the supply practically zero [here and following the quotes are from Pachinger but cited from Krauss]). Consequently most chastity belts displayed in museums are falsifications, one of which Pachinger owns himself. He refers to two specimens in the Munich Nationalmuseum and to one in the private collection of Joseph Salzer in Vienna, of French provenance, dated around 1600. Almost all older research (1750, 1881, 1892) proves to be untrustworthy and fundamentally lacking in scholarly rigor.[116] He also cites two proverbs in German that cull their metaphorical material from the chastity belt:

> Dem Weib, das sich nicht schützen kann,
> Zieht man umsonst den Gürtel an.
>
> [There is no use in putting a belt on a women
> who cannot protect herself.]
>
> And:
>
> Der Jungferngürtel mit dem Schloß
> Vermehrt im Weib die Untreu bloß.
>
> [The belt of virginity and the padlock
> only increase woman's infidelity] (249)

Pachinger next describes the chastity belt in his own collection in minute details, focusing, above all, on the openings for the anus and the vulva. Subsequently he relates how he came across this finding. In 1889 he spent some time in a small provincial town in Upper Austria—no name is given—and visited the local church dating to the middle of the fifteenth century. Restoration work was in progress there, and a leaden coffin had been found underneath the church floor. But this coffin had no markings, no date, and no indication of the skeleton's identity. The rich golden hair, elaborately treated, the valuable clothing, and the gloves indicated that she must have been a wealthy young lady. She wore around her hips an iron contraption with a belt the size of a shoe sole, attached to her body with two locks. All those present during the recovery of the skeleton determined that the belt must have had a surgical purpose ("chirurgische Bandage;" 251; surgical bandage). Perhaps the lady died from a fractured

hip (I wonder if it was caused by a fall from a horse), whereas Pachinger quickly reached quite a different conclusion: "Ich erwarb damit, um zum Schluß zu kommen, einen deutschen, sehr interessanten Keuschheitsgürtel" (251; I acquired, to conclude, a German, very interestingly looking chastity belt). Unfortunately, the author could never find out anything about the dead person's name and social status, but he assumed that she might have been buried in ca. 1600.

In 1904 (1905) appeared another major study on the chastity belt, Caufeynon's *La ceinture de chasteté, son histoire, son emploi, autrefois et aujourd'hui* (Paris: Société d'Édition, 1904). This was richly illustrated with drawings and photos, as I have discussed earlier. Krauss, in his review article, offers a rough idea of Caufeynon's information and argumentation. According to Caufeynon, the chastity belt was an invention of the Renaissance, whereas all other belts that were allegedly created in the time of the Crusades would have to be regarded as falsifications. Most specimens in museums and other collections would fall under this category, only the one piece in the Musée de Cluny in Paris could be interpreted as authentic. The author, however, limits himself to general discussions about the moral purpose of the chastity belt, to warnings against the use of chastity belts, and to chastity belts in modern times, and also touches upon the motif of chastity belts in novelistic literature (252).

Krauss also mentions several reported cases in Slovenia and other areas in the Balkan in which jealous husbands attempted to block their wives's vagina with instruments or acidic materials to prevent their possible adultery (252–53). It goes without saying that the evidence provided here for the historical authenticity of the medieval chastity belt quickly evaporates under closer analysis; even Pachinger's specimen and the illustration provided do not lend much support at all.

The Bilder-Lexikon: The Allegedly Conclusive and Authoritative Summary

In 1928 a multivolume reference work began to appear in print, *Bilder-Lexikon Kulturgeschichte*, that intended to cover all areas of culture, morality, civility, ethnography, and the like, adding copious illustrative material for all peoples and all times.[117] In the first volume we also find an article on chastity belts (anonymous author) which clearly indicates the problematics of the entire research on this topic, resulting from the generalist approach and its positivistic claims. The introduction of this belt (here also called *Treuschutzgürtel* [belt to protect the loyalty] and *Venusband* [band of Venus]) is traced back to the high Middle Ages when the crusaders brought this apparatus with them from the Orient. Five illustrations accompany the

article, the first showing a silver belt in the *Musée Cluny*, Paris, from the sixteenth century, the other a German chastity belt from the *Germanisches Museum*, Nuremberg, undated. The third is a drawing of a chastity belt, again from the *Musée Cluny*, but it contains no openings for the woman's natural needs and consists only of a belt and a lock. The fourth illustration is a drawing based on an Eichstätt document—wrong attribution since Kyeser, who hailed from Eichstätt, did not write his treatise there, as we will see later—from ca. 1400 (Kyeser's *Bellifortis*, 1405), and the fifth is a reproduction of a sixteenth-century woodcut in which three almost completely naked women stand in the doorway of a bedroom, whereas a naked couple lying in bed embraces each other. The three ladies seem to wear very tight underwear, but there is no indication of a lock or any other indication that the artist wanted to present them as wearing chastity belts.

The author admits that most specimens being displayed today would be falsifications, and those few belts, the authenticity of which cannot be doubted, could only be dated back to the sixteenth century. Nevertheless, literary evidence corroborates, as he states, the general claim that chastity belts existed and were used by medieval husbands, vaguely referring to a German codex from 1405 in which the text mentions a chastity belt having been used in Florence (*Bellifortis*). Moreover, Clemens Marot is said to have mentioned a chastity belt in 1525. According to Brantôme (see also Ploss earlier), a haberdasher in Paris offered a large selection of such belts on the market of St. Germain. Melchior Schedel's ex-libris from 1560 shows a chastity belt, and several medieval treatises on the mechanical arts describe how to construct such paraphernalia to preserve women's chastity. He concedes, however, that these objects might also have served an entirely different purpose.

Other collections that have preserved chastity belts are the Nationalmuseum in Munich and the Frauenklinik in Würzburg. The author concludes his article with an expression of surprise that chastity belts are being produced even in modern times, and that too at a high cost. An otherwise unknown woman, Emilie Schäfer, claimed the patent on a lockable protective net for women to prevent them from breaking their chastity vows, but she lost her patent already six months later.[118] Revealingly, the article concludes: "Wenngleich also der K.[euschheitsgürtel] nicht unbedingt in das Reich der Fabel zu verweisen ist, hat er doch nur ganz vereinzelt als perfide Erfindung wahnwitziger Eifersucht seine Anwendung gefunden. . . ." (Although the chastity belt cannot be assigned to the world of the fable, it was actually employed only rarely as a devilish invention of a lunatic jealousy).

This statement clearly reveals the dialectic nature of this myth. The chastity belt, as reported by older scholars, seems just too absurd as to have been used truly in the past, unless for sado-masochistic purposes, but the

references to the various sources—the same as in Ploss, Schultz, and so on.—force the author to assume that such belts must have been somehow part of medieval reality.

The History of Women in the Middle Ages: Max Bauer's Theories

In a rather popular study of women's lives in the history of Germany, Max Bauer reiterates the reports of chastity belts and adds some additional evidence, but also expresses his deep contempt of this object "das seinen Weg über die Alpen nach Deutschland gefunden hatte. . . ." (which found its way across the Alps to Germany).[119] He also refers to Konrad Kyeser's *Bellifortis*, then to a drawing kept in Breslau, and to two museum pieces in Castle Erbach in the Odenwald. They are described by Ploss in great detail, which Bauer quotes in extenso, but nothing allows us to conclude with certainty that these were actually chastity belts. Two images decorate one of them which suggest a dating of the late sixteenth century. The frontal image shows a woman sitting on a man's lap, embracing and kissing him. Below the image is a short poem:

Ach Das sey Eich
geklagt Das mir
Weiber sein mit der
Brüch geplagt.

[Oh, listen
to the laments
of us women
who are tortured
with the pants (chastity belt?)]

In the background stands a smaller-sized man. The rear plate offers the image of a sitting woman of an older age with low hanging breasts. She grabs the upright tail of a fox that crawls through her legs. Below the image follows a poem:

Halt füxel ich
Hab Dich er Wischt
Du büst mir Oft dar
Durch Gewist.[120]

[Got you, little fox,
I have caught you.
You have often
run through (my legs).]

Beyond this meager evidence, Bauer also cites the eighteenth-century novel *Im Irrgarten der Liebe herumtaumelnder Kavalier* (A Gentleman Lost in the Labyrinth of Love) by Johann Gottfried Schnabel (1738) who identified the chastity belt as "the Italian padlock."[121] In addition Bauer quotes several passages from Middle High German courtly love poetry (*Minnesang*), a Romantic poem by Ludwig Uhland, and sums up his discussion with a short treatment of Ulrich von Liechtenstein's *Frauendienst* (ca. 1250), albeit there the lover does not have to deal with a chastity belt on the woman's body at all, even though he is not very successful in winning his lady's love.[122]

Popular Encyclopedias

Contrary to our expectations, the famous *Meyers Großes Konversations=Lexikon* (6th ed., 1909) did not simply follow suit and accept the viewpoint espoused by contemporary anthropologists and ethnographers. The entry on the chastity belt reflects a remarkably critical distance, highlighted by the heavy use of modal verbs in the subjunctive. The author quickly summarizes the general assumptions and references to the chastity belt, having been often used particularly in Italy (Florentine belt), and having been mentioned by various fifteenth- and sixteenth-century writers, such as Brantôme, not to forget the use of the chastity belt as a motif in numerous lithographs and woodcuts. But then the author introduces a healthy dose of suspicion: "Gleichwohl ist nicht sicher, ob solche K.[euschheitsgürtel] wirklich gebraucht, oder bloß von Schriftstellern in satirischer Absicht erfunden worden sind. Die K. der Altertumssammlungen (Musée de Cluny) und Raritätenkabinette sind nicht historisch beglaubigt, und möglicherweise liegen darin Fälschungen, vielleicht auch Umarbeitungen von Foltergürteln des Mittelalters vor" (Nevertheless, we cannot be certain whether such chastity belts were really used or had only been invented by writers of fiction with satirical intentions. The chastity belts in the collections of antiquities (Musée de Cluny) and of rarities are not historically verified. Possibly they are falsifications, perhaps modifications of torture belts from the Middle Ages).[123] The only source he cites is Caufeynon's *La ceinture de chasteté* (Paris 1904 [1905]).

Significantly, when we check earlier editions of this lexicon, such as *Meyers Konversations=Lexikon* from 1876, the entry on chastity and chastity belt is missing entirely.[124] Obviously, the intensive discourse on chastity belts since the time when Bonneau's, Caufeynon's, Dingwall's, and finally Levine's study had come out in print quickly translated into popular concepts of this alleged contraption that needed to be reflected in such reference works and encyclopedias.

A Modern Breakthrough? Alexander Schulz's Contribution

The only modern study offering a somewhat critical perspective toward the chastity belt, at least as far as the Middle Ages are concerned, Alexander Schulz's *Das Band der Venus* (1984), satirically, though certainly appropriately, debunks the myth of this apparatus, but the author published this work in his own small publishing house and did not pursue his topic in a scholarly manner.[125] He explicitly undermines the historical veracity of the medieval chastity belt: "Solche Schauermärchen, aus Zitaten verschiedener zeitgenössischer sittengeschichtlicher Werke zusammengefügt, gibt die heute vorherrschende Meinung über den Ursprung des 'Venusbandes' oder 'Treueschutzes' der Frauen wieder" (8; the modern dominant opinion about the origin of the "band of Venus" or women's "protective gear for their chastity" is expressed in such horror stories, compiled of quotes from various contemporary moral-historical treatises). Schulz compiled an impressive array of literary examples that contain the motif of the chastity belt from the twelfth through the eighteenth century and convincingly identified all these as satires or the result of paranoid jealousy projected into the world of medieval chivalry by nineteenth-century writers: "Denn schon von den primitivsten hygienischen Voraussetzungen her war der Keuschheitsgürtel für die grünen Witwen der Kreuzfahrer ein Ding der Unmöglichkeit" (11; on the basis of the most primitive hygienic conditions the chastity belt was a matter of impossibility for the crusaders' wives left behind). But since Schulz addressed the topic at stake in a naive and simplistic fashion and never engaged in any critical discussions with the "authorities" on the history of the chastity belt, his commendable efforts were mostly ignored and could not shatter the dominance of the mythical thinking.

Moreover, despite his primarily critical approach to this curious gadget, Schulz also falls back to the highly traditional approach and at times accepts the chastity belt in its historical veracity after all, especially when he turns to the Renaissance and Baroque period. As to its origin, for instance, he emphasizes: "Und eben diese Stadt, die ein so sachliches und handfestes Verhältnis zu Geld und Besitz zeigte, hat, wenn nicht alle Überlieferung trügt, den Keuschheitsgürtel zur Sicherung der Frau als materiellen Besitz, wenn nicht erfunden, so doch eifrig angewendet" (18; And just this city (Florence, A.C.), which had such a pragmatic and realistic relationship to money and property, had eagerly used the chastity belt for the protection of woman as a material object, if it had not invented it). While the author adequately interpreted the statements by medieval writers as allegorical, satirical, or moral in intent, he suddenly commits the fundamental mistake of arguing from the very opposite perspective, entirely disregarding his own criticism when he turns to eighteenth-century literature: "Doch nicht

allein in Florenz legte man den Damen dieses eiserne Dessous an. Voltaire berichtet in demselben eben zitierten Gedicht, daß man es in Rom und Venedig trage" (18; People applied this iron underwear not only to women in Florence. Voltaire relates in the poem mentioned earlier that women in Rome and Venice wear it as well).

Equating the metaphorical function of the chastity belt with the real thing, Schulz suddenly changes his position entirely and follows in the footsteps of the previous major myth-makers, naively accepting the literary statements and the art-historical evidence as factual: "die Liste italienischer Städte, in denen das Schloß zur weiblichen Pforte entweder erfunden, zumindest aber benutzt worden sein soll, läßt seine Entstehung in der Zeit der Frührenaissance vermuten und seinen Gebrauch bis ins 18. Jahrhundert verfolgen" (21; the [long] list of Italian cities in which the lock to the female entrance gate is said to have been either invented or at least been used allows us to trace its origin in the time of the early Renaissance and to track its use until the eighteenth century).

Unfortunately, Schulz culled most of the material from his secondary sources and so reiterated many mistakes by older scholarship, citing, for instance, Marie de France's *lai* "Guigemar" as the fourteenth-century "Loi" by "Guyemer" (12), confusing the relevant data and getting everything wrong, even worse than his predecessors. To his credit, however, he has clearly seen through the screen set up by most writers and artists who have dealt with the chastity belt with a specific agenda in mind for their own purposes, and determined the extent to which specific ideological, moral, religious, and political reasons supported the long-range colportage of this historical projection. This will allow me to return to his findings at a later point, mostly in support of my own investigations. The irony of Schulz's failings however, consists of his inability to perceive the contradictory nature of his approach, debunking, on the one hand, the myth of the chastity belt as far as the Middle Ages, and perhaps also the Renaissance, were concerned, and accepting it as a fairly commonly used apparatus in the world of the Baroque and beyond: "Im sinnenfrohen Frankreich des 16. Jahrhunderts scheint also der Bedarf an solchen Schlössern der Tugend groß gewesen zu sein" (27; In sixteenth-century France, which was characterized by a definite enjoyment of sensuality, the demand for such locks of chastity seems to have been high). The language and imagery used here are directly borrowed from Eduard Fuchs (see below) and others (Bonneau, Dingwall, etc.), which vastly undermines the scholarly value of his investigation, which is void of any critical perspectives and plainly copies from previous studies without fully crediting them.

At the end, however, he turns his argument upside down once again and insists that it would have been medically impossible for women to wear a chastity belt for a longer time without facing life-threatening consequences. Most reasonable as an explanation for the existence of chastity belts would be, as Schulz argues, that they served as objects of bragging among a circle of male friends (47; "Renommierstücke"). This would imply that most museum specimens on display still today, or kept in storage, hidden away from public viewing, were deliberately produced in the nineteenth or twentieth century as objects to incite horror, curiosity, male pride, and to poke fun at a primitive, if not barbaric past.

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CHAPTER 2

MODERN AND MEDIEVAL MYTH-MAKING

The Dilettante Art Historian Eduard Fuchs

The modern interest in medieval or Renaissance chastity belts finds a fairly easy explanation in Thomas Huonker's foreword to Eduard Fuchs's (1870–1940) most popular and widely disseminated six-volume *Illustrierte Sittengeschichte vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart* (Illustrated History of Morality from the Middle Ages to the Present), first published between 1909 to 1912 by Albert Langen in Munich, later even reprinted numerous times in paperback, and also translated into various languages.[1] Irrespective of its almost scandalous nature—at least for early-twentieth-century sensibilities—this enormous popularity might perhaps have been an additional reason for it being severely criticized and even persecuted by the authorities. Huonker observes that since the second half of the nineteenth century the scholarly genre of *Sittengeschichte* (History of Morality) tremendously gained in interest because "[d]ie prüden, förmlichen und steifen Bürger dieser Jahrzehnte fasziniert von der Entdeckung [waren], die ihnen die *Sittengeschichte* lieferte, daß nämlich die nackten Tatsachen des sittlichen und sexuellen Gebarens nicht nur anderer Völker, sondern auch der eigenen Vorfahren ihre gewagtesten Träume und Phantasien bei weitem überboten" (the prudish, formality-fixated, and stiff bourgeois from those decades were fascinated by the discovery that the history of morality offered them; that is, the naked facts of the moral and sexual behavior not only of other peoples, but also of their own forefathers, by far exceeded their most daring dreams and phantasies).[2]

Eduard Fuchs was a major art historian and art collector, and gained much respect as a caricaturist, printer, socialist, and writer.[3] He belonged to the circle of Socialist friends of Franz Mehring, Karl Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg, and Clara Zetkin, and would have certainly also been murdered as Liebknecht and Luxemburg were in 1919 during the revolutionary years following the First World War if he had not been sent to Moscow to deliver a political message to Lenin. Fuchs worked on the topic of the origin of artistic creativity and on the history of Socialism.

He edited Mehring's biography of *Karl Marx* (1919; trans. into English in 1935, reprinted in 1936, 1956, 1981), he joined the Communist party in 1919, and emigrated to Paris in 1933.[4]

Fuchs realized, as he states in his own introduction to his *Illustrierte Sittengeschichte*, that the moral criteria have changed over the centuries, and that the question concerning what constitutes morality has been subject to constantly changing conditions. As an historian of morality, he emphasizes, one has to comprehend the relationship between the moral behavior and the general social conditions of man, and one has to identify the respective laws of morality determining each epoch.[5]

These abstract ideas, however, do not necessarily explain the enormous popularity of Fuchs's *History of Morality*. It was reprinted many times, but it was attacked by the authorities through legal means for almost twenty years. Only in 1928 did the German legal system end its efforts to excise Fuchs's highly influential work from the book market,[6] but already in 1933 the Nazis banned both this *Illustrierte Sittengeschichte* and all other publications by Fuchs because of his status as a Jew. The latter had obviously been aware of the highly provocative nature of his study and had published the most scandalous and sensitive text passages and illustrations in three separate volumes that were to be handed out only to scholars, collectors, and libraries. The court added, in its final judgment, that neither women nor children were to have access to this publication.[7] Nevertheless, Fuchs's *History of Morality* proved to be the one item in the library of the Berlin Reichstag which enjoyed the highest demand until 1930.[8]

Whereas many other authors who dealt with the history of morality simply related their observations in plain narrative, Fuchs heavily relied on historical illustrations from his own, vast collection, considering them, perhaps rightly so, as the most reliable evidence to confirm his observations. His colleagues reacted enthusiastically, and agreed that his work served exceedingly well to illuminate the history of human morality, sexuality, and man's relationship to the body. Arthur Weese, for instance, Professor of Art History at the University of Bern, wrote:

> Ihr letztes Werk hat mich als wahres, hochbedeutendes *Document-humain* ungemein interessiert. Welchen Fleiß, welche ernsthaften Studien haben Sie da wieder entfaltet!. . .Eins muß ich erwähnen, daß ich nämlich für "Kuriosa" (von Pornographia ganz zu schweigen) absolut kein Interesse habe. Verstehen Sie mich nicht falsch bitte: Ihr Werk rubriziere ich doch nicht etwa unter die "Kuriosa"!!! **Aber**, bei meiner Abneigung vor diesen ist es **gerade** ein vortrefflicher Erfolg des Buches, daß es mich gefesselt hat.—. . .In unserer widerwärtigen Zeit, wo man die natürlichsten physiologischen Funktionen, das höchste Lustgefühl des Menschen als "Unzucht" bezeichnet, ist man glücklich, Ihren fröhlichen Mut zu finden. . . .[9]

> [Your last work, a true *Document-humain* (document of humanity) deeply interested me. How much industriousness, how many serious studies did you invest here once again!. . .But I must mention that I have absolutely no interest in "curiosa" (not to mention pornography). Please do not misunderstand me. I do not place your work under the category of "curiosa"!!! On the contrary, because of my opposition to these it is the great success of this book that I got fascinated. In our times in which the most natural physiological functions, the highest sensation of lust in man, are identified as immoral, one is happy to discover your joyful courage. . .)

Not surprisingly, Fuchs also included a chapter on the chastity belt, the creation of which was, as he states, the result of wide-spread jealousy in the late Middle Ages. These belts were made out of iron and allowed women to meet only their natural needs, but not to enjoy a sexual experience with a lover. Fuchs reproduces an illustration of a silver chastity belt from the sixteenth century, but he does not identify it at all. Remarkably, the opening is in the shape of a three-leaf clover, but details cannot be easily recognized.[10] Nevertheless, there seems to be a playfulness in this artistic piece that obviously undermines its moral purpose, but neither Fuchs nor his critics realized this aspect and regarded the object itself with great seriousness that is, as typical representatives of a positivistic approach to historical and art-historical studies.

According to Fuchs, the chastity belt was not the only means available to prevent wives from entering an adulterous relationship. He mentions infibulation, the introduction of objects into the vagina that would have been difficult to remove, and the injection of acidic liquids that caused terrible infections and pain, making it impossible for a lover to touch the lady or to enjoy a sexual relationship with her. His observations obviously draw from the claims made by Heinrich Ploss, though he does not refer to him specifically here. Entirely convinced that chastity belts existed, Fuchs emphasizes "Es steht fest, daß man sich seiner in jedem Lande und jahrhundertelang bediente" (there is no doubt that it was used in every country and for hundreds of years).[11] Those who questioned the validity of his claim are disqualified as Romantics with no trustworthy understanding of the past. Fuchs scoffs at those who assumed that the chastity belt was only a product of the Middle Ages when the crusaders knew of no other means to assure themselves of their wives' loyalty and to protect them from rape.[12]

Fuchs admits that numerous specimens in various museums prove to be fake, but he assures his readers that many others can be certainly dated back to the sixteenth century, such as the belt in the collection of Dr. Pachinger in Linz who had secured it personally from a female skeleton (see also Dingwall and his reliance on this reference).[13] There is no explanation why the dead woman had been buried still wearing the chastity belt, nor any

discussion about its authenticity. As in practically all other cases discussed earlier, Fuchs never questions whether the objects that he is referring to might have been used for entirely different purposes. Significantly, he also underscores that hardly any of the extant examples of chastity belts can be dated any further back than the beginning of the fifteenth century.[14]

As the inventor of the chastity belt Fuchs identifies the tyrant Francesco II of Padua, and accordingly these belts were not only called "Venetian locks," but also "Bergamo locks," which finds, however, no logical explanation. Fuchs refers to several literary examples where the young nubile women wear a chastity belt, but he does not give us any titles. On the other hand, he offers an illustration, a copper engraving by Aldegrever from 1532, where a naked man, standing in profile, embraces a naked woman who wears a tight slip at the side of which we might detect a lock.[15] In the short verse novellas by Cornazano there is one reference to a chastity belt that a merchant applies to his wife before his departure for a long journey, but this example is so thoroughly tinged with satire that one wonders why Fuchs even bothered to cite it, unless he utterly misunderstood the obvious intention of this text. I will examine this tale in greater detail later.

Another example can be found in Rabelais, but again Fuchs does not verify his citation and leaves us guessing.[16] Ironically, Fuchs also mentions that many locksmiths created replicas of the keys and sold them to the women left behind who, furthermore, regularly felt even more inclined to commit adultery when their husbands had departed for long periods particularly because the chastity belt had piqued their interest, or roused enough anger against this control mechanism to look for another partner outside of the marriage.[17]

Fuchs reaches the remarkable, but certainly not trustworthy, conclusion that the invention and use of the chastity belt during the Renaissance—he clearly moves its historical origin away from the Middle Ages—confirms his overall observation that during the Renaissance love was regarded as a purely sensuous phenomenon. The chastity belt "bestätigt nicht weniger bezeichnend die wichtigste Tatsache, die der ungeheuren erotischen Expansion jener Epoche" (confirms no less significantly the important fact of the incredible expansion of eroticism at that period).[18] Despite his claim to fame, Fuchs pursues the same methodology as all previous and subsequent writers interested in the chastity belt, taking the evidence at face value without probing its meaning and context any further. Paintings and woodcuts require, just as literary texts, museum pieces, and legal and historical documents, their own methodology, critical approaches, and background information before we can actually claim to have a good grasp of their meaning. All these expertise approaches are missing here, but this is the case with the work of Ploss, Bonneau, Dingwall, and others as well.

In later years Fuchs turned vehemently conservative, speculative, and moralistic, and then also painted the Middle Ages and the Renaissance naively as cultural periods which were determined by primitive, barbaric, and crude sexuality. In his *Geschichte der erotischen Kunst: Das zeitgeschichtliche Problem* (1922), he comments, for instance, on the ideal of courtly love and condemns it as an "einzige Kette derartiger Abenteuer, ein einziger fortlaufender Kommentar derbster Erotik" (nothing but a chain of such adventures, nothing but a continuous commentary of the crudest eroticism).[19] He rejects the traditional opinion that the chastity belt was used as a simple measure to keep women safe from being raped during their husbands' absence, such as on a Crusade. If this girdle would indeed have fulfilled its purpose, Fuchs opines, modern morality would not have any objections to its employment. In reality, however, no rapist, especially no fully trained knight, would have failed to remove the chastity belt forcefully: "Zwischen den klobigen Fingern eines Ritters, der im schweren Eisenpanzer die Turnierlanze zu führen wußte, war dieser silberne Verschluß wie ein Seidenfaden, den er mit zwei Fingern spielend entzwei brach" (162; In the clumsy fingers of a heavily armored knight, who knew well how to handle the tournament lance, this silvern lock was like a thread of silk which he could playfully break apart with two fingers). Fuchs consequently assumes that the chastity belt could only have had the purpose to prevent a wife or a mistress from committing adultery or to sleep with another lover. He reaches this conclusion because he characterizes medieval knights as uncivilized, prone to sexual violence, and uncontrollable: "Der Ritter kannte sich und seine Genossen, er wußte, daß vor ihrer Brunst keine Frau sicher war" (162; the knight knew himself and his fellows; he knew that no woman was safe against their lustfulness).

Strangely, Fuchs then argues that the chastity belt indeed worked well and could not easily be broken, although most women were very eager to engage in adultery, meaning: "Die Anwendung des Venusgürtels war also auch ein Schutz der Frau vor sich selbst" (163; the application of the belt of Venus was also a protection for the woman against herself (i.e., against masturbation, A.C.). Astonishingly, Fuchs then establishes a corollary that is not based on any evidence, but formulated in a most authoritative, though circular, hermeneutically contradictory, fashion: "Damit aber wird diese Institution für die Zeiten, da sie im Gebrauch war, zu einem überzeugenden Beweisstück für die in ihr herrschende wilde, zügellose Erotik" (163; Consequently this practice of using a chastity belt at that time becomes a convincing piece of evidence concerning the unbridled, wild eroticism). The open-minded, cultural historian, and serious scholar Eduard Fuchs suddenly reveals a disturbingly unprofessional, highly moralistic attitude when he jumps to conclusions without any effort to adduce proof or verify any of his claims.

Turning to the sixteenth century, the author suddenly evaluates the chastity belt as a most shameful object, as if the observation of chastity would have been exceedingly opprobrious: "Dieser ungeheuerliche Keuschheitsgürtel" (185; this ghastly chastity belt). Now he believes that this girdle was widely used even among urban dwellers, not because of the actual danger that women could be raped by knights, but because of a deeply seated jealousy on the part of the husband. As proof for his historical perspective regarding this contraption, Fuchs cites, obviously following Bonneau's model, a lengthy passage from the literary dialogues contained in a seventeenth-century erotic novel by Nicolas Chorier, *Joannis Meursii eleganti latini sermonis; seu, Aloisia sigœa toletana de arcanis amoris & veneris, adjunctis fragmentis quibusdam eroticis* (ca. 1658–60), which became popular reading material far into the late eighteenth century, and was even reprinted in Leipzig in 1913. Here the husband does not object to his wife's gallantry and almost intimate exchanges with a guest of honor, as long as she wears a chastity belt (I will return to this topic later).

The obviously literary projection, a purely fictional design, apparently escapes Fuchs who morally condemns the entire work and even takes it at face value, protesting vehemently against the decline of morality during the Renaissance: "Solche Dokumente belegen ebenso drastisch wie zwingend die Kühnheit, die in geschlechtlichen Dingen zur Zeit der Renaissance geherrscht hat" (186; Such documents demonstrate both dramatically and forcefully the audacity with which sexual matters were handled during the Renaissance). Whereas Fuchs had been seriously concerned to document the history of the chastity belt in his *Illustrierte Sittengeschichte*, the *Geschichte der erotischen Kunst* pursues quite a different agenda. Although the author still argues from a historian's point of view, now he is exclusively concerned with illustrating the moral depravity of the past. Hence the sharp condemnation of the chastity belt which emerges as a major icon of late-medieval and early-modern decline of ethics and morality.

Ironically, Fuchs never seems to realize that his own study of the history of erotic art heavily contributed to the dissemination of eroticism, and the more he condemned erotic and sexual practices of the past, the more he lured his readers into a world of erotic fantasies, a major feeding ground for the development of mythical thinking regarding the past. His *Illustrierte Sittengeschichte* was reprinted in 1967, and as a paperback edition in 1985 and in 1990 in Tokyo; it appeared in Russian as early as 1914, then again in 1993–94, and again in 1995; in Spanish in 1985 and 1996; in Japanese in 1972, whereas his *Geschichte der erotischen Kunst* was reedited in 1977 (Berlin: Guhl). Surprisingly, among Fuchs's works only his study on the erotic element in caricature was translated into French, *L'élement érotique dans la caricature: un document à l'histoire des meurs (sic) publiques* (Vienna 1906; originally printed as *Das erotische Element in der Karikatur: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der öffentlichen Sittlichkeit*, 1904 [privately printed], and 1906).

Modern Museum Pieces

Moving to the immediate present, even modern art historians and museum experts sometimes still fall prey to this myth, though they begin to voice serious doubts about the authenticity of the medieval chastity belt. One specimen in the Museum Kasteel Sypesteyn in Nieuw-Loosdrecht, The Netherlands, for instance, though beautifully crafted and adorned with many ornaments, which formed part of the highly acclaimed exhibition *1000.000 Jahre Sex—Über Liebe, Fruchtbarkeit und Wollust* (100,000 Years of Sex: On Love, Fertility, and Lust) in the *Museum für Archäologie und die Geschichte Harburgs in Hamburg-Harburg* (Museum for the Archeologoy and History of Harburg in Hamburg-Harburg), October 15, 2004 to January 16, 2005, proves to be a modern reproduction of a fantasy object.[20] G. Legman unequivocally avers that "So far as a perfectly impartial consideration of the evidence leads one to believe, the chastity belt has *never* had any real historical existence, and all the examples in museums (as that of the Cluny Museum: the most famous) are modern fakes."[21]

However, David Gaimster, in his contribution to the exhibit catalogue, *1000.000 Jahre Sex*, only formulates some doubts, questioning that such girdles might have been used in the Middle Ages. Alternatively, they might have been, as he suggests, "Phantasieprodukte der viktorianischen Zeit" (87; fantasy products of the Victorian time). This would be confirmed by an eighteenth-century drawing on ivory, also in the Museum Kasteel Sypesteyn, showing a naked woman sitting on a large pillow, wearing a thin chastity belt. Her maid hands the key for the lock to a lover who pays her for the service (87).

In her examination of the chastity belts held by the Hanns Schell Collection in Graz, Austria, Martina Pall raises serious doubts about their historical authenticity, referring to problems of chafing and hygiene. Nevertheless, she still emphasizes that such contraptions have existed for hundreds of years and concludes that despite the high degree of improbability: "It might be permissible, nonetheless, to assume that women in centuries past would on occasion choose to wear chastity belts, themselves, to be protected against rape from pillaging or marauding enemies or when embarking on major journeys."[22] Little wonder, then, that Fuchs's opinion, and the statements by many other scholars before and after him, still seem to hold sway today. Let us trace this myth-making process further.

Histories of Morality and Studies of Popular Culture

In modern cultural histories, such as Paul Frischauer's *Knaurs Sittengeschichte der Welt* (Knaur's World History of Morality; 1968), we observe the same

fascination with this mythical, if not fetishist object. Frischauer intensively deals with the chastity belt, among many other objects, and closely connects it with the history of the Crusades. The long absence of the husbands necessitated, as he claims, the application of the chastity belt, but the argument leads to an illogical conclusion insofar as he assumes that these belts were worn for years. To satisfy his reader's curiosity, Frischauer immediately emphasizes that skillful locksmiths were available who could reproduce the keys, which allowed the left-behind wives to enjoy any sexual relationship they wanted. The author even goes so far as to suggest that these keys were passed from one man to another, and this according to the rules established by the alleged courts of love where these lecherous wives governed and had no hesitation to commit adultery all the time. Frischauer concludes his highly superficial discussion with a reference to the clerics who closed their eyes and disregarded the entire immoral behavior of their flock, so as not to be forced to take any action. In particular, as the author underscores, they did not want to alert the husbands who were supposed to fight energetically and in full dedication to the cause of the church without any disrupting thoughts of their possibly adulterous wives back home.

Two sentences in Frischauer's short consideration of the chastity belt deserve to be quoted in full because they well illustrate how much the entire account of medieval chastity belts was the result of modern erotic fantasy: "Diese aus Eisen geschmiedete Bewacher der 'dämonischen Pforte' waren mit Schlössern versehen. Nur der Ehemann sollte den 'Schlüssel zur Lust' besitzen; nur ihm sollte es möglich sein, die Scham seiner Frau zu berühren und zu genießen" (These protectors of the "demonic gate," welded out of iron, were equipped with locks. Only the husband was supposed to hold the "key to lust"; only he was supposed to be allowed to touch and enjoy his wife's vagina).[23]

None of the aspects included in Frischauer's account deserves to be examined in greater detail here, except as a reflection of his own erotic fantasy and of his attempt to titillate his audience's erotic desires. He quickly moves on in his discussion of medieval morality and turns even to the famous *Nibelungenlied* (ca. 1200), which apparently served him as an example of medieval immorality and sexual abuse, which, although it has nothing to do with the topic of the chastity belt, clearly illustrates how little the author understood anything of the medieval texts.[24] Certainly, Brunhild's belt symbolizes her virginal power, but it is a far cry, if not the very opposite, of a chastity belt.[25] Remarkably, Frischauer also includes a photo of two chastity belts in the collection from Castle Greifenstein on the Danube (north of Vienna), some of the best in all the relevant publications dealing with the chastity belt. Both girdles seem to serve the expected function, with respective openings for the vagina and the anus. Curiously,

one of the belts also displays a ring of teeth around the hole, as if the purpose might have been to avoid anal sex. This belt is of a simple design, whereas the other shows beautiful clasps and excels by its more sophisticated metal work. But neither is dated, and since the decorations on the clasp do not allow any specific dating either, these specimens do not supply the desired evidence. Frischauer's book does not live up to any academic expectations, and sorely lacks in scholarly quality and rigor. But it well illustrates the extent to which modern erotic fantasies led to the exploration of the theme of the chastity belt in the late twentieth century.

Jungbauer, however, who composed the article on "the belt" for the famous *Handbuch des deutschen Aberglaubens* (*Handbook of German Superstition*; 1930/1931), offered a different perspective, much more balanced and careful in his assessment of the available evidence. According to him, the chastity belt, also known as the Florentine belt, was supposed to have been used in Italy. But he casts a shadow of doubt on the entire affair when he emphasizes: "Bei den Keuschheits-G.n oder Florentiner-G.n. . .ist es nicht sicher, ob sie wirklich gebraucht wurden. Und wenn es geschah, so waren es doch nur vereinzelte Fälle" (1217; As to the chastity belts, or Florentine belts, we do not know for sure whether they were really used. If this was the case, then only in exceptional cases).[26] He also notes that the chastity belt was predominantly mentioned by fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Italian writers, such as Brantôme, and that a number of old lithographs and woodcuts contain the motif of the chastity belt. Significantly, Jungbauer refers back to Eduard Fuchs as his most important source, though he maintains a critical distance.

The same attitude can be observed in Lutz Röhrich's encyclopedia of proverbs (1992), one of which also involves the chastity belt: "Einen Keuschheitsgürtel tragen (müssen)" (to wear a chastity belt [or to be forced to]). Röhrich's sources are Jungbauer's article and Dingwall's monograph. As critical as Jungbauer, he underscores the unreliability of the evidence supporting the historicity of the chastity belt: "Solche Gürtel sollen angeblich seit den Kreuzzügen in Gebrauch gewesen sein, vor allem bei den Florentinerinnen. Sie wurden seit dem 15. Jh. beschrieben u. in Holzschnitten u. Kupferstichen später auch dargestellt" (Such belts were supposed [double emphasis in the German, A.C.] to have been used since the Crusades, especially among the Florentines. They were described since the fifteenth century and depicted in woodcuts and lithographs).[27] Remarkably, Röhrich also includes a photo of a beautiful chastity belt with an elegant design, showing Adam and Eve standing next to a tree holding their hands. A snake is wound around the tree stem, which strongly underscores the moral warning not to engage in sexual activity. But Röhrich neither dates the belt nor does he specify its location (either in Nuremberg or in Munich). This is curious and

significant for the methodological approach, as already practiced by Eduard Fuchs and others. Although Röhrich specifically addresses the dubious authenticity of the chastity belt, the inclusion of this photo suggests the very opposite. The inattentive reader would be invited to accept the information about the chastity belt as firm evidence, which seemingly finds its strong corroboration through the belt, although a careful examination would determine that it is either a modern (re)production or an artifact from the sixteenth or seventeenth century. Moreover, the exquisite design proves that it must have been worn for fashionable reasons, maybe as part of early sadomasochistic rituals.

The Chastity Belt in Early-Modern Art: Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries

The sixteenth century actually saw the emergence of the motif of the chastity belt in the visual arts, which the nineteenth- and twentieth-century historians of morality and sexuality took as firm proof that these belts actually had existed. The huge collection of illustrated broadsheets, edited by Wolfgang Harms and others since 1985, contains, several interesting examples.[28] No. IE 126 "Wer Eyffern wil der schaw" (Incipit: He who wants to be jealous take a look) presents a bedroom scene with the young naked wife sitting on her bed looking at her husband, standing across from her, richly clothed—but an old man. This copper engraving by Heinrich Wirich (flourished 1571–1600), today kept in the Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel, consists of various segments, beginning on the left with the image of a fool, who obviously serves as a reflection of the cuckolded husband because he is trying in vain to cover a basket out of which fleas are jumping. The husband's foolishness is indicated by his hat, decorated with bells. He is ready to depart, already equipped with his spurs and a lengthy sword, a travel coat and lavish clothing. Behind the bed, in the right corner, squats the lady's lover, also fully dressed, obviously waiting for the husband's departure, who is about to receive from his wife the key to the chastity belt which she hands to him with her left hand. But he will be cuckolded, after all, as soon as he will have left, which is indicated in the background in a simultaneous scene where we see him, through the open window, riding away in the far distance.

Indeed, the wife wears a chastity belt, as indicated by the triangular opening in her slip and the padlock on her left side—though a far cry from the mechanical requirements for a chastity belt to function properly. Behind the lover stands the lady's chambermaid, and she already holds the duplicate key for the chastity belt, which clearly indicates the ironic nature of this illustrated broadsheet. The verses below the broadsheet inform us in

greater detail about the meaning of the illustration. The poet formulates the warning against jealous husbands to keep women's true nature in mind, since they are familiar with all tricks and ruses to achieve their goals: "Ich sag für war füer Frawen list, / Vff Erden nichts verborgen ist" (3–4; I tell you in truth, nothing on earth can be hid from women's cunning). The husband is ridiculed as an "eifferer" (7; jealous man) who believes that he might be able to protect his wife's virtues:

Die weil er aber ein eifferer war
Macht er ein Bruch von eisen gar
Darmitt er Fromm behielt sein Weib
Zog er das ihr an ihren Leyb
Vnd heing ein starckes schlos darfür
Das niemand öffnen soltt die thür (7–12)

[Because he was a jealous man
he made an iron pants.
To preserve his wife's piousness.
He put it on her body
and attached a strong padlock
so that no one could open the door.]

The following verses equate this stupid husband with a fool who thinks that he would be able to control a basket full of fleas. A chastity belt would not at all prevent the wife from committing adultery, whereas the belt itself would only cause the husband to worry all the time: "Hat nichts denn angst vnd sorgen viel" (22; he has nothing but many fears and worries). There is no doubt, as the anonymous poet indicates, that all padlocks can be opened with a second key, and it would be total foolishness to think that a chastity belt could achieve its desired goal:

Wann einer wil verschliessn
Da ander mehr drumb wissn
Wie mans auff machen kan. (25–27)

[When one person wants to lock,
others know about
how to open it.]

The poem ends with a proverb which signals the utter uselessness of trying to subordinate the wife by means of a mechanical device when the husband leaves here alone at home: "Dann ist d' Katz nicht zu Hausz / So hat jhren lauff die mausz" (31–32; if the cat is not at home, the mouse has free reign).

The attractive young woman obviously complies with her husband's requests and voluntarily turns over the key to the padlock of her chastity

belt to him, but she does not seem to care much about him and already has more turned to her hidden lover than to her husband, as indicated by her leaning backwards on the bed. Copies of this broadsheet also exist in Leiden (PK, two), London (British Library, Department of Prints and Drawings, B 6), Paris (Bibliothèque Nationale, B7, without text), and in Wolfegg, Sammlung der Grafen von Waldburg-Wolfegg (B 6).[29]

The same scene, but turned right side and providing us with even more specific details, was printed on a broadsheet in the late sixteenth century, and is today housed in the Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel (IE 119: Representation Dv Coqvvialovx).[30] The details of the individual figures are changed slightly, and so are their gestures. The husband looks rather angry at his wife, who passes the key for her chastity belt to him with her right hand, which makes it impossible to see her breasts. Whereas the German print shows the wife with a fairly simple hair-do and a plain necklace, the French print shows her with a highly fashionable hair-do, wearing two necklaces. We can clearly perceive the padlock, which hangs on the right side of the chastity belt. Curiously, however, there is only a small grated opening for her vagina, which indicates even further the impossibility of actually wearing such a belt in seriousness. The lover appears to be much more passionate and youthful than in the German print, and he looks toward the maid, who holds the duplicate key, offering her a bag full of money.

The satire of cuckolded husbands gains in strength here, as does the ironic use of the pictorial motif of the chastity belt. The poem below the illustration also emphasizes the thrust of the entire broadsheet, insofar as it begins right away with a reference to the cat that hunts a mouse and awaits the husband's departure:

> Comme le chat faict la souris
> Je guette que ce coqu sorte,
> Qui croit comme un tas de maris
> Seul auoir la clef de sa porte. (1–4)
>
> [Like the cat hunts the mouse,
> so I am awaiting the cuckolded's departure,
> who believes, as a whole bunch of husbands,
> to be the sole possessor of the key to his door.]

Other copies of this broadsheet also exist in Paris (Bibliothèque Nationale, B 16, B 17), and elsewhere.

The commentary regarding the chastity belt, once again, relies on Eduard Fuchs's *Geschichte der erotischen Kunst* (1908, 201–02), and emphasizes the lack of sexual inhibition in the sixteenth century: "Wie in den

beiden anderen Blättern (I, 99 und 101) kreist auch hier die Thematik um das Verhältnis zwischen Mann und Frau, das von einer beträchtlichen sexuellen Freizügigkeit geprägt ist und nur vordergründig den Anschein der Dezenz zu wahren sucht" (As in the two other sheets [I, 99 and 101], the theme focuses on the relationship between husband and wife which is determined by a considerable sexual libertinage and tries to preserve the appearance of decency only superficially).[31]

Christa Grössinger makes the relevant observation regarding the motif of the lustful woman in early-modern prints: "Women, like peasants, were popular stereotypes in the repertoire of print makers. Both were known for their sexuality, but whereas peasants were stupid, women were clever and able to manipulate men of all classes for their sexual satisfaction which, moreover, had no bounds. Profane prints rarely depict virtuous women, and if they do, the women turn out to be stiff and symbolic. . . ."[32] Her survey of sixteenth-century wood-prints demonstrates that this stereotype of the powerful, lustful, and ultimately foolish woman was pervasive and resulted from deeply seated misogyny and men's fear of the temptation by the flesh. This fear was rooted in the teachings of the ancient Church Fathers, St. Jerome above all (*Adversus Jovinianum*, ca. 393), and experienced many adaptations throughout the centuries. The chastity belt ultimately became one of those symbolic objects reflecting upon this gender stereotype, but it seems highly questionable today to accept this iconographic element as a mirror of a historically verifiable object.

Early-modern print-makers such as Hans Vogtherr the Younger (1513–68) played with this motif as well, such as in his woodcut from ca. 1540 showing a naked woman who wears only a chastity belt, standing between an old man (her husband? her pimp?), who has put one hand on her left shoulder and his other hand close to her right breast, and a lover to whom she hands over the money that she had taken out of the other man's purse.[33] An entirely different reading of this scene might be possible, however, as suggested by Eva Larraß, which I will discuss later. The scroll above the old man's head reads: "Gelt vnd guetz gnung wil ich dir geben / mustu nach meinen willen leben / Greyft mitter hannde in meiner tuschen / Des sloß will ich dich auch erlassen" (I'll happily give you enough money, then you will have to live according to my rule / Put your hand into my purse / Then I will spare you the lock). Although the chastity belt is usually associated with a husband, here the old man seems to be as much a wooer for the woman's love as the young man. The scroll above the woman's head reads: "Es hilft kain sloß für frauwen list / kain trew mag sein dar lieb nit ist / Darumb ain slüssel der mir gefelt / Den wol ich kauffen vmb dein gelt" (No lock can fight against a woman's rusefulness / no loyalty can exist where there is no love / Therefore I like a key / which I want to buy with

your money). Over the lover's head we read in the scroll: "Ich drag ain slüssel zw solliche slossen / Wie wol es manchen hat verdrossen / Der hat der narren kappen fill / Der rechte lieb erkauffen will" (I carry a key for such locks / Although many a man got angry about it / he got many fools caps / who wanted to purchase love). The young man already holds the key for the lock, and it might well be that the woodcut describes a simple scene with a prostitute and two unequal lovers. Therefore, unmistakably, the belt and its lock serve only as symbols of the woman's unavailability for the old man and her lust for the young man.

A woodcut by Peter Flötner (ca. 1485–1546), "A Woman Cutting her Chastity Belt," probably from the same time, proves that some other sixteenth-century artists too relied on this motif to satisfy men's desire for highly erotic illustrations.[34] As Christa Grössinger states, it "verges on the obscene in its depiction of the nude woman, in hat and with heavy gold chain, sitting on a grassy bank fiddling with a pair of scissors in an attempt to cut loose her chastity belt, accompanied by a maid carrying a bowl of water, while a bespectacled fool approaches on all fours intent on lighting his candle from her bottom, the seat of her hot passions. . . ."[35] The woodcut might, of course, also simply reflect irrepressible misogyny, fed by ancient fears of women's inexhaustible sexual desire, hence by fear of male impotence, especially because the ensemble includes the grotesque fool who has turned his gaze toward the woman's loins, obviously in expectation of seeing her being exposed after she has cut the chastity belt.

All the iconographic elements, such as the woman's gold chain, the fool to her side, and the maid holding a bowl of water, confirm the element of fantasy, or erotic imagination. A woman who wants to cut open her chastity belt would be a paramount sexual object willing to engage in sexual intercourse because of her own frivolous physical appetite. This woodcut therefore only proves that early-modern artists were familiar with the iconographic motif of the chastity belt, whereas neither Vogtherr's nor Flötner's works could be cited as evidence for the historical reality of the chastity belt as an apparatus of regular use. They certainly fantasized about it and based the satirical element of their images on this iconographic motif, but this does not necessarily imply a correlation with historically verifiable objects commonly in use.

Vogtherr's design, especially, reveals its satirical nature through the money changing hands and the grotesquely large size of the padlock. Grössinger convincingly confirms this observation, though she is not primarily concerned with the chastity belt as such, when she turns to the motif of "wild people," who also figured frequently in late-medieval and early-modern woodcuts and other art works.[36] The same could be said about the plethora of medieval monsters in wood and stone carvings, in frescoes, on

world maps, and in travelogues, who mostly served a metaphorical purpose and were not automatically reflections of creatures that actually existed.

Only as an aside, if we carefully consider the chastity belt in Vogtherr's woodcut, we quickly realize the comic nature of this apparatus even from a simply pragmatic perspective. Here, the belt consists of a regular looking slip to which is attached a heavy padlock. There would be no problem for the woman, or anyone else, to pull down the belt or to rip it apart because the lock does not fulfil any mechanical purpose. Instead, the artist was obviously aware of the symbolic significance of a chastity belt and allowed his spectators to enjoy the erotic allusion predicated on the binary opposition of sexual availability and superficial, hence ineffectual mechanical protection.[37]

Vogtherr apparently created only one woodcut with the theme of the "chastity belt," and beyond this one I could hardly find any other woodcut from the same period that would have addressed this motif, except for Peter Flötner's (1491/1492—1546) lithograph.[38] and the print by another anonymous sixteenth-century Germany artist who created his work in 1589. The work by this anonymous artist, housed today in the British Museum, London, offers a number of significant variations, although the similarities to the broadsheet in Wolfenbüttel (possibly by the artist Wirich) are striking.[39] Again we are confronted with a married couple, with her sitting on a wooden bench attached to the bed, shaking the hand of her husband, who has obviously locked up his wife in iron shorts, or a kind of hip belt. He hands the key to a servant or friend, and in the background, again in a simultaneous scene, we see the husband sitting on horseback, about to depart. She looks at him rather distraught, and there is no lover lurching in the background, though her maid stands ready, as it seems, to help her out of these shorts as soon as the husband would have left. Next to the two men squats a fool on the floor, trying to catch fleas with an open basket. Below the image we read the following poem:

Wer eyffern wil der schaw nur an
Wie es ergehe diesem man.
Fur weiber list, er wisse frey,
Das gentzlich nix verborgen sey.
Es hett ein man ein frewlin schon,
Wolt vber landt ausreyten thonn:
Weil In nun trieb die Eyffersucht,
Er machen lies ein eisen bruch,
Dieselbig anzog seinem weib,
Das nicht geschendet w[erdt] ihr leib,
Vnd hieng ein starckes schlos dafur,
Das niemant offnen möcht die thur,

Den schlussel thut befehlhen fein
Dem knecht vnd trewen diener sein.
Also von dannen reythen thut,
Der katz vertrawt den kesen gut.
Ist also eben gleich dem Narren
Der wolt die floeh im korb versperren,
Kundt sie darjnn behalten nit,
Macht Im nur müh vnd arbeit mit.
So gehts auch einm der eyffren wil,
Macht Im nur sorg vnd marter vil.
Dan wie die floeh im korb nit bleiben
So wirdt das schloss sein gang auch treiben.

[Whoever wants to be jealous, simply look
what happened to this man.
Know well, against women's cunning
nothing can be kept hidden.
Once a man was married to a beautiful woman;
he planned to go on a journey.
Because he was racked by jealousy,
he ordered shorts to be made out of iron;
these he had her put on
so that her body would not be shamed.
He attached a strong padlock
to prevent anyone from opening the door.
He carefully entrusted the key
to his loyal servant.
Then he rode off.
He who entrusts cheese to the cat
is like the fool
who wanted to lock flees into a basket,
but could not keep them therein,
he only gained worries and labor.
This also happens to him who is driven by jealousy,
he gains nothing but trouble and torture.
Just as the flees do not stay in the basket,
the padlock will go its way.]

This anonymous poet is the only one who described this type of chastity belt as an enormously broad belt to which a big padlock is attached. The irony of the entire setting is also expressed in the typical contrast in physical appearance between him and her. Whereas he stands in front of her dressed in pompous, almost ridiculous clothing, with pump pants decorated with leaves, and an enormous accordion collar, she is naked, except for the belt. The pictorial narrative and the verses confirm each other: such a chastity belt would never achieve its desired end, and any jealous husband

who might think that he could keep his wife from committing adultery would be foolish.

Sexual themes, or at least elements of strong erotic nature, can be found in many different fifteenth- and sixteenth-century woodcuts. The *llustrated Bartsch* offers a wealth of material and covers practically the entire history of art in the European world from the late Middle Ages to the eighteenth century (though neither Vogtherr nor Flötner are included here). For our purpose, investigating this multivolume œuvre on the search for chastity belts, I have focused on the late fifteenth and sixteenth century, but I mostly came up with empty hands. In "The Kiss" (no. 20), for instance, produced by an anonymous artist (Basel, perhaps by Israhel van Meckenem) we see an amorous couple in tender embrace.[40] While he is kissing her and presses her right breast, she holds his hand, somewhat in a defensive position but still smiling at the viewer. Both are dressed in a courtly fashion and express happiness.

Concomitantly, numerous early-modern playing cards show highly erotic scenes, but none of them contains the theme of the chastity belt. Even scabbard designs, here by anonymous artists, offer no examples, though erotic allusions are not missing. Tobias Stimmer (1539–84), in his series of "The Ages of Man and Woman," shows us the various stages in the life of women, from ten years of age to one hundred years, but he entirely refrains from any erotic allusions, not to speak of the chastity belt.[41] The woman at the age of thirty (no. 15) is shown holding a small child in her right arm, whereas a bundle of keys are attached to a rope dangling on her right side. The forty-year old woman holds a little dog in her arms, but not one of them is shown as morally suspect or in need of any male control, such as by means of a chastity belt. And the subsequent stages in a woman's life (nos. 16, 17, and 18) are also far removed from any such possible allusion because old age removes the danger of adultery entirely. Stimmer's series of women musicians and then of couples contain much valuable information about fashion, music instruments, jewelry, clothing, shoes, figures of dance, and the like, yet neither here nor anywhere else do we come across any reference to a chastity belt.

Countless woodcuts with the theme of the muses or of Greek mythological figures freely present the nude female body, such as in the work of Jacob Binck (ca. 1500–ca. 1569).[42] But Binck never includes any scene that might smack of the erotic or might imply conflicts between husband and wife, caused by helpless jealousy, which would lead the former to apply a chastity belt to her body (see, for example, nos. 27–58). The same observation applies to the woodcuts by Georg Pencz (or Pentz) (ca. 1500–50).[43]

Intriguingly, the Nuremberg artist Erhard Schön (ca. 1491–1542) played with the motif of the chastity belt in one of his medallion, titled: "Nude Woman with Chastity Belt Hands the Key to a Young Man while

Reaching for the Purse of an Old Man (Derschau B 14; an old impression is in Vienna).[44] The motif is directly borrowed from Hans Vogtherr, except that the old man, here wearing no hat and being clearly marked as being of old age through his bald head, stands on the right side (her left) and holds her behind and one arm with which she stretches out to his purse. The young man, now on the left (her right) smiles at her and takes the huge key, which is almost as long as her entire arm, but the padlock is not visible. The woman wears nothing except a bombastic hat and a tight slip, which could be interpreted as a chastity belt. The small size of the image makes it impossible to identify details, such as coins that she might take from one of he men, but her nakedness, the old man's gesture, and the young man's rich outfit would confirm the observation offered by Eva Larraß regarding Vogtherr's woodcut. Again, it seems most likely that the woman represents a prostitute, and the slip, or belt, would be nothing but a temporary protection until the customer had paid the fee for the sexual favor.

Schön also created another medallion[45] with a motif that bears great similarity to the woodcut by Peter Flötner, though it is obviously based on Jacob Binck's woodcut of Lady Vanity.[46] There the naked woman frontally faces the viewer but turns her head toward her left, looking into a mirror, while she holds a lamp or a candle holder in her right hand. She wears a fabulous hat decorated with rich plumage, whereas her long curly hair flows down to her hip. A rich cloth is draped around her arm and loosely covers her genitalia. A fool, to whom she does not pay attention, lies on the ground to her left and looks up to her. Schön's image also shows a fool, though he is positioned on the other side. Here the lady likewise wears a large hat, a heavy necklace, and holds a bird in one hand, a purse in the other, both of which are connected with a string which does nothing to cover her genitalia. However, the woman's posture, especially her extended arms and the head bending to the left (our right) strongly suggest a deliberate playfulness operating with a specific motif that was popular among some sixteenth-century artists and seems to reflect a fanciful idea based on an erotic imagination. The so-called chastity belt cannot be identified as such because of the ludic and prurient nature of the image, although the key indicates, in fact, that the young man will have to unlock the slip/belt in order to gain access to her sexual favor, which apparently costs him some money, as the old man's purse signals.

Fifteenth- and sixteenth-century book illustrations, however, apart from broadsheets and single woodcuts, seem never to have dealt with the chastity belt.[47] One possible explanation might be that most sixteenth-century artists were primarily concerned with religious themes, war scenes, city portraits, coats of arms, and personal portraits, and might have shied

away from dealing with the human body and sexuality. This is, however, not necessarily the case, if we consider, for instance, Hans Weiditz (ca. 1495–1537)'s grotesque images of an "Old Woman and Two Children" (IV:1470), "Winebag and Wheelbarrow" (IV:1473), or "Drunkard and His Wife" (IV:1477). Hans Sebald Beham (1500–50) unabashedly created woodcuts showing a naked Fortuna figure (female; I:220), a scene of an adulterous couple (I:221), and a scene of fornication (I:221; both figures still clothed).

We cannot determine whether other early-modern artists ever dealt with the chastity belt, but Geisberg's monumental, four-volume *The German Single-Leaf Woodcut* definitely confirms that chastity belts are a rarity and could only have been used as an iconographic motif for very special purposes. This does not bode well for the traditional assumption that the existence of the chastity belt in the Middle Ages and/or the Renaissance could be verified. The image of the padlock by itself, however, finds a number of symbolic functions and does not necessarily pertain to a woman's sexual organ that needs to be protected or contained.

Hans Guldenmundt (middle of sixteenth century), for instance, created a woodcut with the motif of the slanderer ("Der falsche klaffer"), whose tongue is tied up, so to speak, with a lock that holds his tongue outside of his mouth.[48] In other words, both belt/girdle and padlock have always been important iconographic symbols and literary allegories, which makes it more than likely that most modern writers who wanted to perceive in such objects around women's waists specific examples of concrete chastity belts might have been victims of their own erotic fantasy.

In 1532 (possibly a little later, ca. 1534–36) Heinrich Aldegrever (ca.1502–55 or 1562), one of the most popular German sixteenth-century artists working at creating designs in small size—he belonged to a group called "Little Masters"[49]—created a scabbard design with a nude couple, as mentioned earlier. While we see the man from his profile, she is standing facing the viewer and wears a chastity belt.[50] The description provided for this design on the scabbard held by the British Museum reads: "the female figure at 1 in front view and wearing a chastity belt; below animals masks and a female torso among foliage against cross-hatched background."[51] There is no doubt that the girdle of chastity does not represent any barrier for their love making since she hands the key for the padlock to him. The belt itself, if we can call it thus, proves to be nothing but a regular looking slip to which a lock is attached. Since the man already holds the woman in an embrace with his right hand and has taken the key from her with his left hand, the satirical nature of this illustration cannot be ignored. In many other scabbard designs the artists depicted both male and female nudes, but no other figure wears anything like a belt or any other protective garment covering the genitals.

Apart from the one scabbard design with a nude man and a woman wearing a chastity belt, here no. 248, Aldegrever never seems to have returned to this motif. He has a number of other sheath designs with nude female figures (nos. 249, 259), but none of them includes the chastity belt.

Heinrich Aldegrever also created a series of allegorical woodcuts showing the various virtues and vices. Lady Lust is presented as a topless woman who lifts one of her breasts toward the viewer, whereas she holds a large feather in her other hand (1549).[52] Once again, however, we search in vain for the chastity belt which apparently exerted very little interest, and if it was included, then obviously only for satirical purposes.

A comprehensive survey of all fifteenth- and sixteenth-century woodcuts produced by German and other European artists remains a desideratum, but on the basis of my selective examination of Bartsch's huge, perhaps even comprehensive collection it seems highly unlikely that we might find other designs that include the chastity belt. This has nothing to do with the clearly observable fact that a majority of late-medieval and early-modern art was occupied with religious themes, especially drawing from the New Testament, martyrology, and hagiography. After all, many artists also dealt with secular themes, and hence focused on the erotic and the human figure. The focus often rests, in clearly scopophilic nature, on the woman's eroticized body, such as Wenzel von Olmütz's "Woman Holding an Escutcheon with a Swan."[53] Her belt, however, is nothing but an ordinary belt wound around her waist and would rather invite a lover to unfasten it than to keep him away, not to speak of the absence of a padlock and any sense of a husband's possible jealousy.

Late-medieval book illustrations confirm these observations. First, the theme of the chastity belt does not surface anywhere in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century literature, except for some satirical verse novella, and second, the artists never endeavored to show a scene that would suggest that the chastity belt was known or was in common use.[54]

Seventeenth-century artists working in the area of woodcuts did not shy away from treating a wide range of themes, often appealing to their audience with highly sensational, even erotic scenes, or images of gruesome violence and of sensational events, births, figures, war, and death. Nevertheless, we find hardly any satirical motifs, and certainly not one woodcut from that time that would illustrate a chastity belt.[55]

Interestingly, the Nuremberg artist Albrecht Schmid (ca. 1667–1744) created a woodcut showing us a scene in the workshop of a locksmith.[56] A woman approaches the journeyman and requests a new key for a lock because the old one does no longer work well. But she is decently dressed, and there is no indication of any sexual allusions. Quite on the contrary, the artist was only interested in the practical side of a locksmith's

workshop, depicting the tools, equipment, benches, locks, and hinges ready for sale. One man in the background is working on a clockwork, but both here and in all other woodcuts dealing with craftsmen's workshops nothing suggests any interest in the erotic, that is, in the chastity belt.

An examination of the early Italian engravings held in the British Museum yielded the same negative result, although many of the Italian artists did not shy away from creating numerous scenes containing nudes of both genders. Obviously, the satirical element is missing here entirely, since the artists primarily focus on biblical and classical motifs, while the myth of the chastity belt did not seem to figure in their repertoire.[57]

Froben Christof von Zimmern: A Late-Medieval Chronicler Who Knows Nothing about the Chastity Belt

An argument *ex silentium* for the imaginary character of the chastity belt, albeit it can be certainly identified as a noteworthy iconographic motif, can be drawn from the sixteenth-century chronicle by Count Froben Christof von Zimmern (d. 1567) and his scribe Johannes Müller (d. 1600), which covers the history of this Swabian noble family from ancient times to 1558. Scholarship has often emphasized the enormous value of this multivolume family chronicle for our understanding of early-modern cultural history, and the history of mentality and everyday life.[58] The writer offers copious examples of the pragmatic and metaphorical use of the word "gürtel" (belt), but not one of them has anything to do with chastity, not even with women's belts. For instance: "Es hett der Herman Boß, so einest bei marggraf Christoffen von Baden zu hof, für dise herzogin gefüegt, der konte kisslingstain ußer ainer wandt brunzen, also war er under der gurtel gstaffiert" (Hermann Boß, when he once stayed at the court of Margrave Christoff of Baden, had taken care of the duchess (made love with her); he was so well equipped below his belt that he could break pebbles out of a wall).[59] Or: "Von dem het des Volmars weib erfaren, wie er under der girtel gefast (dann es waren bei ir keine, als die mit eim langen elmeß, angenem). . . ." (Volmar's wife had heard how well he was equipped underneath the belt [she did not like any man except those who had a large tool]).[60]

Several almost pornographic examples of how a woman tried to steal either a valuable seal or a rich belt reemphasize the particular frankness with which the chronicler dealt with body parts and did not shy away from reporting everything as he had heard it. In both cases the woman tried to hide the stolen object in her anus, but since it was so valuable, the search for it was not abandoned. Instead the woman was stripped naked, which then revealed the site of her hiding place. In the second case an Italian King Hugo lost his belt

because his deceased brother's wife stole it and stuffed it into her body cavity. Unfortunately for her, she did not complete the job thoroughly enough and oversaw that a red thread of silk still hung out of her anus. One of the servants notices this thread during the body search: "Do ist er nit unbehendt, erwischt den faden und zeucht den girtel mit gewalt herauß" (He was quick of mind, grabbed the thread and pulled out the belt with force).[61]

Nowhere does Froben Christof von Zimmern mention a chastity belt, though he would not have hesitated to discuss such an incident involving this apparatus if he had known of it or had heard rumors about it.

Gianfranceso Straparola: Almost Obscene, but Ignorant of the Chastity Belt

Intriguingly, much of sixteenth-century literature that would easily lend itself for the treatment of the chastity belt, does not even include the motif at all. This is the case, for instance, with Rabelais's *Gargantua* (1534), which I will discuss further in connection with the German "translation" by Johann Fischart in his *Geschichtsklitterung* (1575). Another important example would be the Italian Gianfranceso Straparola (ca. 1480–1557 or 1558), composer of erotic tales and novellas, who thematized numerous types of erotic adventures, many of which he seems to have heard of through oral channels and which clearly reveal an Oriental origin, among them the almost archetypal conflicts between a young wife and her old and jealous husband.[62] His *Piacevoli notti* (first printed in 1550, then in 1551, 1553, 1554, 1555, and continuously after that at least until 1608),[63] translated as *The Facetious Nights*, closely follows the model established by Boccaccio with his *Decameron* (ca. 1350) in more than one sense, though the tragic context is entirely missing. This collection experienced a tremendous popularity, having been republished at least twenty times during the late sixteenth century, and was translated into French in 1560 (nine editions before 1600, many times thereafter), then into German, English, Russian, Chinese, and other languages from the eighteenth through the twentieth century.[64] But Straparola never turns toward the chastity belt, and this is fully in accordance with the observation regarding Boccaccio's *Decameron* and Marguerite de Navarre's *Heptaméron*. An extreme case would be, for instance, the second fable of the fourth night in which the Athenian Erminione Glaucio accuses his wife Filenia Centurione of having committed adultery, after he has kept her as a virtual prisoner in a tower in his palace. This is the case indeed, but the blame would not rest on her so much; instead she was pursued by a young man, Hippolito, who found a smart way of entering the house hidden in a chest, and so he became her lover. Erminione imposes an ordeal on his wife, forcing her to put her hand

in the mouth of a snake that would bite it off in case of her guilt. Very similar to the ordeal case in many of the medieval *Tristan* versions,[65] Hippolito disguises himself as a madman and manages to kiss Filenia in public during the procession toward the site of the ordeal. This then allows her to swear an oath that she has never been touched by a man except her own husband and this madman. She is subsequently saved, whereas her husband is thrown into prison and soon dies there.[66] Here Straparola would have had a great opportunity to integrate the motif of the chastity belt, but he refrained from doing so, like most of his contemporaries, apparently because it was of no value to him or because he did not even know of it.[67]

Straparola based his *Piacevoli notte* in part on Girolamo Morlini's (ca. 1470/1485–after 1528) *Novellae e fabulae*, originally composed in Latin.[68] These novellas also prove to be highly erotic in nature, often playing with the motifs of adultery and jealous husbands. But whereas some modern scholars have claimed that Morlini included a satirical reference to the chastity belt in one of his tales,[69] a careful examination of the modern edition by Giovanni Villani (1983) did not yield the desired result. But even if the motif of the chastity belt had surfaced in any of Morlini's or Straparola's novellas, the overall satirical context of their narratives would have immediately undermined the historical value of such a reference.[70]

History of Fashion

Historians of fashion do not seem to know of the chastity belt either. Francis M. Kelly and Randolph Schwabe discuss male and female fashion in England from 1066 to 1800, but they shed no light on the alleged existence of the chastity belt, although they offer highly detailed information about the various layers of clothing worn by women during all major periods of English history until 1800.[71] Wolfgang Bruhn and Max Tilke provide an impressive overview of fashion from antiquity to the modern world, but they are interested in clothing, armory, hair style fashion, shoes, and the like, and do not deal with underwear or, for that matter, chastity belts.[72] Maurice Leloir examines the function of belts both for men and women in the Middle Ages and beyond, but he does not include any reference to a belt serving the function of protecting a woman's chastity.[73]

Perhaps the girdle itself as an important element of female fashion throughout times might have led some of the oldest writers on the chastity belt to jump to their conclusions. As Ludmila Kybalová, Olga Herbenová, and Milena Lamarová underscore, in the Middle Ages the belt symbolized its bearer's honor and virtue. In some cities prostitutes were banned from wearing a belt, whereas honorable women attached their purse, or other objects, to the belt. But they do not know of the chastity belt at all.[74]

In many respects we are dealing with imagination and fantasy, born by artists, poets, medical writers, and the audience in the early-modern period. This was discussed in great detail by the contributors to an international conference in Bochum in 2002, though none of them addresses the chastity belt.[75] But the editors clearly emphasize: "Es ist die Einbildungskraft, die dem Menschen ein anstrebenswertes Ziel, das einen Lustgewinn verspricht, innerlich vor Augen führt; sie steht also am Anfang jedes sexuellen Geschehens" (9; it is the force of imagination that mentally presents man with a desirable goal, which promises the gain of lust. Imagination, in other words, is the origin of every sexual event). Imagination, then, creates desire, it facilitates sexual acts, and is responsible for the consequences of the sexual act (ibid.). The imagination of the chastity belt obviously works along the same parameters, though fed by the very opposite fears of a wife's adulterous interests. We also need to keep in mind that much of eighteenth-century discourse on women's infidelity and men's need to control their wives' sexual drives, hence the use of the alleged chastity belt, was closely connected with the public discourse on the "dangers" of masturbation.[76]

The Chastity Belt as a Theme in the Discourse of the Enlightenment

The Encyclopedists

Significantly, in the period of the Enlightenment, Diderot and D'Alembert, in their highly influential *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire Raisonné des Sciences, des Arts et des Métiers* (1751), had also something to say about this apparatus. First, they discuss the chastity belt in its employment by the ancients, as confirmed by Homer, who mentioned the practice of having the newlywed husband remove a probably symbolic chastity belt from his bride during the wedding night: "c'étoit la coûtume chez les Grecs & les Romains, que le mari dénoiioit la *ceinture* de sa femme le premier foir de ses nôces" (It was the custom among the Greeks and Romans that the husband unbuckled his wife's belt on the first wedding night). By contrast, the modern, that is, medieval and early-modern, use of the chastity belt was quite different: "chez les modernes c'est un présent qu'un mari jaloux lui fait quelques-fois dès le lendemain" (among the moderns it is a gift which a jealous husband sometimes gives her the following day). After a detailed description of the mechanical details, the article continues: "On dit que cet instrument si infame, si injurieux au sexe, a pris naissance en Italie; c'est peut-être une calomnie: ce qu'il ya de certain, c'est que l'Italie n'est pas le seul pays où l'on en ait fait usage" (It is said that this so infamous object, so injurious to sexuality, originated in Italy; but this is perhaps a calumny; what is certain is that Italy was not the only country where it was in use).[77]

The enlightened author vehemently rebelled against the idea behind the chastity belt and sharply criticized its employment during earlier times, which illustrated the author's deliberate choice of this object to contrast the "enlightened" present with the "unenlightened" past. The more he protests against this injury committed to women in the past, the more, however, the author contributes to the dissemination of the myth because an abomination such as the chastity belt gains full credence when even highly respected scholars such as Diderot and D'Alembert lend their weight to the battle against such unenlightened practices in the Middle Ages.[78]

Voltaire: The Eternal Satirist—Not a Testimony for the Historical Chastity Belt

As we can tell today, the motif of the chastity belt exerted considerable influence on public opinion since the eighteenth century, when it was regarded as an infamous object of medieval and early-modern abuse of women. However, as we now also have to realize, insofar as the myth of the chastity belt had entered the world of literary fiction, no contemporary writer was interested in or capable of approaching the topic critically. Voltaire, for instance, composed an entire novella, "Le Cadenas," first published in 1724, based on this motif, and situated in the Underworld where old Pluto, rich but hated, ruled, together with his unloved wife, Proserpina. He himself is identified as "dieu, mais avare et jalous: / Il fut cocu, car c'était la justice" (god, but miserly and jealous: He was cuckolded because this was justice).[79] Afraid of not being able to control his wife, Pluto convenes an assembly of his advisers, who had all been cuckolded as well during their lifetime before having been sent down to the Underworld. One of his advisors, a Florentine, recommends to kill all women, but since this would not be possible with immortal Proserpina he suggests, true to form of the stereotypical Florentine (at least in Voltaire's mind), a chastity belt:

> Je voudrais donc, pour votre sûreté,
> Qu'un cadenas, de structure nouvelle,
> Fût le garant de sa fidélité.
> A la vertu par la force asservie,
> Lors vos plaisirs bornreront son envie;
> Plus ne sera d'amant favorisé. (567)
>
> [I would suggest, for your security,
> a chastity belt with a new design,
> which will be a guarantee for her fidelity,
> bound by force into being virtuous,
> her desires will be confined to your pleasures.
> No lover will ever receive her favors again.]

However, the irony is not even subtle here, and the basic narrative elements only confirm how much, at least for Voltaire, the chastity belt serves simply as a fantasy product without historical roots. After all, this girdle is invented and fabricated in Hell; a Florentine suggests producing one, and the entire assembly of underworld senators consists of men who had been cuckolded during their life—"Qui, dès longtemps en cocuage experts" (Those, for a long time, had been experts in cuckoldry; 567). Finally, Pluto emphasizes that this devious invention would soon be in full use in places such as Venice and Rome, eagerly sought by men of all social classes (568), although the narrator seriously questions its effectiveness: "Mais son trésor est-il en sûreté?" (But is the treasure secure?). Decidedly ironic, Voltaire encourages the lovers among his audience not to worry about the outcome because true love would always overcome even such mechanical barriers. Whoever would have won a woman's heart would soon also conquer the rest: ". . .: et quand on a le cœur / De femme honnête, on a bientôt le rest" (568; Once one has gained the heart of an honest woman, one has soon also the rest). But Voltaire was ironic, which the encyclopedists might not have noticed.

Johann Gottfried Schnabel

In Germany, the author Johann Gottfried Schnabel (1692–ca. 1750) incorporated the motif of the chastity belt in his anonymously published amorous novel, *Der im Irrgarten der Liebe herumtaumelnde Cavalier* (The Amorous Gallant Staggering Around in the Garden Maze of Love). Schnabel is highly respected for his utopian novel *Insel Felsenburg*,[80] but he did not gain much fame, or favor, with the first novel, as reflected by the fact that it has not received any significant attention by German scholarship until today.[81] The entire novel deals with endless love affairs and related erotic adventures, so it does not come as a surprise that we also hear of a chastity belt that makes it impossible for Herr von L. (Sir of L.) to engage in lovemaking with the wife of the medical doctor Ögneck: "Nur zum Hauptzwecke war nicht zu gelangen, weil Ögneck seinen Lustgarten mit dem gewöhnlichen italienischen Schlosse dergestalt fest verwahrt hatte, daß niemand einsteigen konnte" (191; It was only impossible to get to the main point because Ögneck had locked up his garden of pleasure so tightly with the usual Italian padlock that nobody could enter).[82] The lover soon manages to get the husband totally drunk, then he takes away the key and returns to his lady with whom he spends a delightful night. The next day he has a copy made of the key with which he can enjoy his lady for weeks to come until she gets pregnant. The husband believes that it is his own child and never learns the truth that all his efforts to keep his wife chaste

during his absence had been for nought, except for much later, long after the affair had ended. The trick had worked especially well because the lover had pretended to be castrated—he had his testicles bound backwards, which the doctor, despite his expertise in human physiognomy, did not realize. Herr von L. continues to make love with his mistress, always with the help of the key which opens the chastity belt, until Dr. Ögneck's wife is about to deliver his child. This dramatically cools down the lover's passion and he disappears from the scene shortly thereafter. Tragically, however, the doctor later finds out the truth and has the lover murdered one day by two bandits, whereas he himself poisons his wife and child to death (198). The narrator does not explain the circumstances that described how the truth had come out and quickly concludes with this episode.

The chastity belt as a literary motif, however, proves to be nothing but a satirical element that heightens the erotic tension. Schnabel, in other words, considerably contributed, like several other eighteenth-century writers, to the myth-making process, and the earliest scholars who later researched the history of the chastity belt, such as Max Bauer, mistakenly cited this author as a trustworthy source. Nothing could be further from the truth, but we begin to perceive how this kind of literary testimony entirely misled twentieth-century scholars, especially anthropologists and art historians who naively accepted Schnabel's and Voltaire's statements, among many others, as facts, without recognizing the erotic-satirical nature of their references to this curious object. Even here, just like in sixteenth-century woodcuts and lithographs, and so also in fifteenth-century drawings (Kyeser) and literary texts (Sercambi)—for detailed discussion of both, see further—the chastity belt proves to be nothing but a facetious object without a trace of authentic quality because for each padlock a duplicate key can be made.

The Chastity Belt in European Dictionaries and Reference Works

German Sources

Whereas some of the eighteenth-century German encyclopedias paid considerable attention to the chastity belt, more linguistically oriented authors showed little or no concern with this term. Johann Christoph Adelung (1796) includes the lemma "Keuschheit" (chastity), but not "Keuschheitsgürtel."[83] The same applies to Joachim Heinrich Campe's *Wörterbuch der Deutschen Sprache* (1808),[84] while *Trübners Deutsches Wörterbuch*, edited by Alfred Götze (1943), briefly mentions the chastity belt and provides an alternative name as well, "Florentiner Gürtel" (Florentine Belt).[85] He defines the belt

as a mechanism with a lock that allowed the husband to secure his wife's chastity during his own absence. However, Trübner entirely relies on Alwin Schultz's *Das höfische Leben* and refrains from any further discussion.[86]

But the myth lives on, as is common for many other myths about the Middle Ages. In fact, one of the key characteristics of myths are their longevity and resistance against critical investigations as to their historical veracity. The twentieth edition of the famous *Brockhaus* encyclopedia, published in 1997, presents the following, rather astonishing information as facts: Chastity belts were also known as Florentine belts, or Venus belts, and served to function as a protection of the wife's chastity during her husband's absence. The anonymous author admits, however, a certain degree of uncertainty, when he states: "Angeblich seit den Kreuzzügen in Gebrauch, nachgewiesen und dargestellt jedoch zuerst im Kyeser-Codex von 1405" (Allegedly in use since the crusades, but confirmed to have existed and illustrated first in the Kyeser Codex from 1405).[87] The term "Florentine belt" was derived from the assumption that Florentine women wore such chastity belts. Other illustrations of a belt date from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The article concludes with references to actual pieces in private collections and museums, of which we have heard a lot in the previous discussions (*Musée Cluny* in Paris, *Germanisches Nationalmuseum* in Nuremberg, *Bayerisches Nationalmuseum* in Munich).

Only the 2001 online version finally injects a healthy dose of skepticism, suggesting that the medieval chastity belt might have been a sex toy only, whereas the traditionally assumed function to prevent a woman from having sexual intercourse outside of her marriage would have been impossible because of medical-hygienic reasons, since the unavoidable chafing and subsequent infections could have easily led to the woman's death.[88] The most reasonable explanation, as Ralf Pfeifer argues, would be that the myth of the medieval chastity belt was invented during the Baroque era, or by the Doge of Venice to enforce tax payments from the city's prostitutes.[89] These comments are very welcome because of their critical perspective, but they also ignore most of the centuries-old discourse on this object and, most noticeably, neglect to consider the important art-historical evidence and literary documents.

On the other hand, some of the major bibliographies dealing with the history of eroticism and sexuality do not even seem to know of the chastity belt, such as the *Bibliotheca Germanorum Erotica & Curiosa* (1912–14; Library of Erotica and Curiosities among Germans).[90] The same applies to the *Handwörterbuch der Sexualwissenschaft* (1926; 2001; Handbook of Sexual Studies), although this reference work, like many other modern compendia, would have been the predestined forum to discuss such a curious topic.

When we turn to most recent dictionaries, the chastity belt shockingly resurfaces again and is introduced as a matter of fact characteristic of previous sexual practices in the Renaissance or the Middle Ages. Amazingly, in the 1999 edition of the German *Duden*, we read the following definition: "mit einem Schloss u. einem die Genitalien bedeckenden Steg versehener, metallener Gürtel für Frauen, der gewährleisten soll, dass sie bei längerer Abwesenheit des Ehemannes mit keinem anderen Mann Geschlechtsverkehr ausüben" (a metal belt for women equipped with a lock and a board that covers the genitalia, which was to guarantee that she could not enter a sexual relationship with another man during the lengthy absence of the husband).[91] Indeed, the myth lives on unabatedly.

French Dictionaries

Authors of French dictionaries do not seem to have had much interest in the chastity belt, or simply did not include any noteworthy references to it. In the *Altfranzösisches Wörterbuch* by Tobler and Lommatzsch we come across entries for "ceinture," "ceinturel," "centurete," but no references to the "chastity belt."[92] The word also seems not to have existed in the Middle Ages, according to Frédéric Godefroy's *Dictionnaire de l'Ancienne Langue Française*.[93] The same applies to the modern period, if we can trust the *Trésor de la langue française*.[94] Surprisingly, the lemma "Ceinture de chasteté" appears in the famous *Larousse du XXe siècle* (1929), but this would conform with our observations regarding the intense interest in the chastity belt as a mythical representative icon of the premodern period demonstrated by early twentieth-century anthropologists and historians. The *Larousse* simply defines this girdle of chastity as a "[b]andage fermé à cadenas, que la jalousie employa autrefois pour sauvegarder la chasteté des femmes.[95] No further explanations are given.

Italian Reference Works

In modern Italian reference works we notice a lack of interest in the chastity belt, though not entirely. The *Enciclopedia Hoepli* (1963) includes an entry for "cintura," which discusses the use of belts throughout Western civilization, but has nothing to say about chastity belts.[96] The *Enciclopedia Italiana di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti* (1950) provides an amazingly detailed account of where, when, how, and why belts had been used among the Greeks, Romans, and in the Middle Ages, but the "chastity belt" is not mentioned even once.[97] The situation is different in Salvatore Battaglia's *Grande Dizionario della Lingua Italiana* (1964), where the author cites various passages in medieval Italian literature with specific references to

belts as a part of the costume. Then, however, he also mentions the chastity belt: "apparecchio di ferro, di forma simile a quella di una cintura da stringere intorno ai fianchi e al ventre e da chiudere con un a chiave, con il quale nel medioevo si pretendeva di assicurare la fedeltà della moglie" (iron apparatus, similar in form of a belt to be tightened around the waist and to be locked with a key). In the Middle Ages they pretended to secure the fidelity of their wives with it). Moreover, he even cites a literary source, Bacchelli, 2–227: "[le donne], teste indocili e cuori voluttuosi,. . .le metteremo in conventi laici! O forse le cinture di castità" (women, with disobedient heads and voluptuous hearts. . .let us put them into lay convents! Or maybe apply the chastity belts).[98] Characteristically, however, practically nothing is known about this writer, who seems to have lived in the fifteenth century, but who is not listed in any of the standard literary histories.[99] Perhaps the quote was taken from Riccardo Bacchelli (b. 1891),[100] but in that case this would not have any bearing on the history of the chastity belt. Other encyclopedias, though often pleasantly detailed regarding the use of the belt in the Middle Ages as a feature of the military armor and as an important aspect of male and female fashion, do not even register the "chastity belt."[101]

Dutch Dictionaries

This observation also applies to the Dutch language dictionaries, where the term "kuischheid" (chastity) appears in the one of the most comprehensive dictionaries, but not the analogous "chastity belt."[102] Curiously, modern lexicographers rediscovered the chastity belt and included this lemma once again, then, however, offering only vague definitions and without providing any reference to a reliable source or to a date when the term might have been used first: "kuisheidsgordel (m.), gordel die geslachtsmeneenschap onmogelijk maakt, vroeger door mannen die van huis gingen hun vrouwen aangelegd tot verzekering van hun kuisheid" (belt which makes sexual intercourse impossible, in the past used by men who left their homes [and] who applied it to their wives to ensure their chastity).[103]

Latin Dictionaries

Most important, though, even medieval Latin appears not to haven known the term "cingulum castitatis," as negatively documented by the authoritative Du Cange (1883).[104] Even the highly respectable *Mittellateinisches Wörterbuch* (1968), that takes us to the end of the thirteenth century, knows of no text passage that would include the compound term.[105] However, a simple search on the Web certainly comes up with a number of examples

where the expression was used after all, such as in Nicolaus de Gorran's *Canonical Epistles*: "Dicit ergo, propter quod. Glossa, quia tanta gratia vobis est promissa, ut videatis illum quem nunc vident Angeli, succincti, a luxu luxuriae per cingulum castitatis, lumbos mentis vestrae, non solum carnis, idest luxuriae fontem, Glossa, ut superfluas voluptates a mente resecetis" (It tells you the following. Gloss: Because so much grace has been promised to you that you may see Him whom the angels see now, you should be girdled against the unchastity of luxury, through the belt of chastity; girdle the loins of your thoughts, not only of the flesh, which is the source of luxury. Gloss: may you cut away the superfluous voluptuousness from your mind).[106]

The expression "cingulum castitatis" apparently developed into a common term, a trope, in theological discourse, especially in the late Middle Ages, but its meaning was strictly limited to the idea of divinely ordained chastity and was far removed from the coarse meaning which the sexually explicit object, so much rumored about in the following centuries, implied in concrete terms.

English and American Encyclopedia

Considering the enormous longevity and survival of the myth concerning the chastity belt, we would also expect a certain tradition in Anglophone reference works. This is, however, not the case, especially because the lemma "chastity" often does not even surface, such as in the ninth edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*.[107] In fact, none of the subsequent, editions ever included an entry either on chastity or "chastity belt," as if this was a topic the English-speaking public was not supposed to be exposed to.[108] The *London Encyclopœdia, or Universal Dictionary of Science, Art, Literature, and Practical Mechanics* (1829) at least includes an entry on chastity, but has nothing to say about the chastity belt.[109] The *Pantologia* (1819) is even briefer in its comments on chastity and does not go beyond that.[110] In Abraham Rees's *Cyclopedia* (1819), we reach the same conclusion, as if this aspect of the globally popular discourse had entirely passed English scholarship without evoking the least interest.[111] Wherever we look, the result is always the same: sometimes chastity is treated from a religious-historical, or moral perspective, but there are no references to the chastity belt, probably because the association with the erotic and the sadistic element was too much of a provocation.

The results of our investigation only change slightly when we use the search term "girdle," which is mentioned, for instance, in the *Encyclopœdia Perthensis* (ca. 1806). "Chastity" does not figure, but "girdle," particularly "maiden's, or virgin's girdle," does. However, the author only refers to ancient Greek and Roman practices of using girdles to serve as a symbol of

the ultimate joining of husband and wife: "It was the custom among the Greeks and Romans for the husband to untie his bride's girdle. . . . Festus relates, that it was made of sheep's wool, and that the husband untied it in bed. . . ."[112] This would clearly imply that the girdle had a sexual connotation, which later writers might have transferred to the jealous husband's fear of being cuckolded, although the myth of the chastity belt does not really surface here. The exact same information is contained in the *London Encyclopædia, or Universal Dictionary* (1829, X, 197). Significantly, the various editions of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* follow the same path, though expanding the range of information on the "girdle," but never shedding any light on the "girdle of chastity."[113]

This noteworthy dearth of entries on the "chastity belt" in the Anglophone world, however, does not necessarily suggest that the myth did not have some impact on the public opinion, as the fabled *Oxford English Dictionary* (1989) reveals, where the term reappears, to be sure, this time supported by several references to its use, such as the "1922 *Index-Catal. Libr. Surgeon General's Office, U.S. Army* 3rd ser. III. 1003/2," and then also Dingwall's notorius monograph, and several newspaper citations until 1969,[114] which employed the chastity belt as a metaphor for political and administrative issues. But this has not always been the case for the *OED*, as the 1933 edition, for instance, clearly indicates, where the lemma "chastity" exists, but not "chastity belt."[115]

Not surprisingly, the *Webster* also offers a brief entry, though without any source material: "a belt device esp. of earlier times designed to prevent sexual intercourse on the part of the woman wearing it."[116]

Only recently, however, the chastity belt made a significant inroad into the broad public imagination once again through the *Oxford Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*, where we suddenly read, almost unheard of within the Anglophone world, about the chastity belt as a "historical term for a garment or device designed to prevent the woman wearing it from having sexual intercourse."[117] As innocuous as this brief entry might be, it clearly suggests that the modern English-speaking public is well-aware of the term "chastity belt" and would need to be informed about its origin and meaning. Whereas the honorific and grandiose encyclopedias and dictionaries ban the chastity belt from their horizon, smaller reference works, but also those that claim the highest authority, obviously reintroduced the myth of the chastity belt as a gadget commonly applied to women sometime in the past.

Sexology

Whereas anthropologists dominated the field of research on the chastity belt during the early twentieth century, about sixty years later sexologists

discovered this field once again, perhaps best represented by the comprehensive encyclopedia edited by Lo Duca (1962).[118] Here the chastity belt is well represented in a lengthy article. After a list of alternative terms for the belt, such as "the Florentine belt," "the Italian belt," "guardian of chastity," "belt of Venus," and so on, an introductory comment follows that clearly reveals the overall intent of this terminological approach pursued here: "Ein Gerät, das von eifersüchtigen Männern erfunden wurde, um den Frauen jede erotische Befriedigung, die sie nicht zulassen wollten, zu verbieten" (329; an apparatus invented by men who used it to prohibit women from gaining any sexual satisfaction, which they did not want to grant them). The anonymous author is not vexed by any deep-seated doubts about the allegedly common practice of applying a chastity belt to wives suspected of possible adultery, and he describes a model according to which basically all such belts have been produced and consequently used throughout time. The author states, claiming to report only factual information (I summarize): The belt was invented in Africa and reached Europe via the Orient, whereas the Greeks and the Romans did not know it. The first testimonies for such a chastity belt can be found in the *lai* "Guigemar" by Marie de France and in the *Livre du Voir-Dit* by Guillaume de Machaut, an argument which obviously stems directly from Eric Dingwall's study (see earlier).

The author admits that various interpretations of both texts have been suggested and that it remains difficult to prove whether these two poets had truly the chastity belt in mind. Firm evidence for the chastity belt, we are told, can be found in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, when it was first used in Italy. The author refers to Conrad Kyeser's *Bellifortis* from 1405, to the tyrant of Padua, Francesco (here Franz) II of Carrara (specimen still in the holdings of the Museum of the Venetian Doge Palace), Brantôme's *Vie des Dames galantes* (Collected Works, 1864–82, Vol. 11, 133), then to Tallemant des Réaux, parliamentary councillor in Paris, who mentioned the chastity belt in 1630 (*Kleine Geschichten*), and Jean Buvat (*Journal de la Régence*, 1715–23; here is a reference to Charlotte Aglaé d'Orléans, or Mademoiselle de Valois) (331). The article continues with a rather surprising discussion of other legends surrounding the chastity belt in the Musée de Cluny in Paris, as if there might be some doubts regarding the veracity of this curious object. But then the author returns to his positivistic approach by emphasizing that chastity belts were used in Germany during the sixteenth century, as evinced by an illustration in the 1572 edition of Sebastian Brant's *Narrenschiff* (*Ship of Fools*), and then in Max Bauer's *Frauenzimmerschule* (1792 [*sic*]). Apparently, the author had culled this information from Dingwall, who had, however, specifically differentiated between the original edition of the early-modern German

Narrenschiff in 1494, and the much later version which contained different illustrations and iconographic elements. The citation of Max Bauer, finally, proves to be an example of confusing a modern scholar (Bauer) with an anonymous author of a premodern text.

These small errors, irrelevant by themselves, prove to be decisive in deconstructing the scholarly value of this article. The artist Francisco Goya (1746–1828) is also said to have depicted the chastity belt in one drawing (which one?) and also a monstrous metal cover for a woman in the painting "Confidence." The author then mentions a treaty against the introduction of the chastity belt published in 1750 in Montpellier by M. Freydier, and a short essay entitled *Der Keuschheitsgürtel* (1881 [in German]), edited by Carré who claimed it to be a work by Casanova. We also hear of cases in the nineteenth and early twentieth century when some writers protested against women's infidelity and praised the good use of the chastity belt, as if these comments had any significance for the actual historical verification of the chastity belt.

The author openly admits that writers such as Rabelais (*Pantagruel*) had poked fun at this "weapon for the jealous," and he also cites M. de Gérard's *La Rome ridicule* (seventeenth century) and *L'Amour Sentinelle ou le Cadenas force* (1669), but this does not distract him from concluding: "[es] mußten fast vierhundert Jahre vergehen, bevor man von einem Gerät abkam, für das eifersüchtige Männer nicht weniger als sieben verschiedene Ausführungen ersonnen hatten" (333; four hundred years had to pass before the use of an apparatus was rejected, of which jealous men had invented no less than seven different versions).

The only value of this lexicon entry consists in the reproduction of several illustrations, such as the allegorical drawing by Fragonard, *The Chastity Belt* (no date, but probably eighteenth century),[119] and a twentieth-century newspaper caricature of a woman chained to a pole and standing in a cage, her whole body covered with metal parts protecting her loins and her breasts. The title reads: "No. 241: Visite a la cage de la sequestrée de Vaugirard" (Visit to the cage of the sequestered woman by Vaugirard), and below we read the words uttered by a waiter who explains to two elegantly dressed ladies: "C'est égal. . . Il ya des femmes qui ont de la chance d'être aimée comme ça!. . ." (This is of no import. There are women who are lucky to be loved this way!).[120]

The myth of the chastity belt, as displayed in this very serious, if not scholarly encyclopedia on sexology, proves to be exactly the same as the one that we had observed in the German reference works on technology published in the 1970s. As P. M. Ladiges indicates in his foreword: "Lo Duca entwirft in Bild und Gegenbild eine erotische Utopie. Er verbindet im Grunde noch die gleichen Vorstellungen mit dem Ideal, die schon in

der mittelalterlichen religiösen Spekulation zum Ausdruck kamen: die Sehnsucht nach einer prosexuellen Gesellschaftsform, die Erlösung des Geschlechts aus der Zwangsjacke des Tabus, die Nichtanwendbarkeit moralischer Verdikte auf dem Gebiet der Triebe, vorausgesetzt, daß man ihren Mechanismus begriffen hat. . . . Der Wert der Enzyklopädie Lo Ducas liegt also nicht allein in der Fülle ihrer Informationen; er tritt auch für Grundsätze und Lehrmeinungen innerhalb der Diskussion ein, die noch lange nicht abgeschlossen ist. . ." (5; Lo Duca projects an erotic utopia in pictures and caricatures. He basically combines the same concepts (of the chastity belt) with an ideal that had already been expressed in medieval religious speculation: the longing for a society in favor of sex; the liberation of sex from the straightjacket of the taboo; the nonapplicability of moral verdicts to the area of instincts, on the premise that their mechanism had been understood. . . . The value of Lo Duca's encyclopedia hence rests not only in the plethora of information; he also defends principles and learned opinions within a discourse the conclusion of which will have to wait for a long time).

Apparently, the approach to the question concerning the chastity belt, as applied in this comprehensive encyclopedia on sex, has not been changed one iota in comparison with Eduard Fuch's influential *Sittengeschichte* (1909–12).

Again we have to confirm that once a myth has been implanted and has gained public, especially scholarly, reputation, it seems almost impossible to challenge its historical character and to realize its constructed nature. Of course, critical opinions against this myth have been voiced from time to time, but then they were mostly hidden within a wide context of other topics concerning sexual neurosis, fantasies, personal complexes, and other psychological issues. In his highly respected study of the *Rationale of the Dirty Joke*, G. Legman, for one at least, radically dismissed the notion of the chastity belt as a myth and determined that the surviving specimens must all be nineteenth-century fakes. He emphasizes: "Since the popular dissemination of literature on the chastity belt, in the last half of the 19th century, and the entering of the idea into folk-circulation, actual examples have of course been constructed and even used, usually by jealous husbands of rather low social level and obviously high neuroticism."[121] But this was a lone voice, and his opinion about the chastity belt was not based on any thorough examination of the relevant research literature, not to speak of the primary materials and documents.

There is, however, some hope, as the modern field of sexology seems to pursue a different, more critical, hence also more skeptical approach. In *Sex A to Z*, for instance, Robert M. Goldenson and Kenneth N. Anderson briefly describe the chastity belt as an apparatus used by jealous husbands in

the late Middle Ages, but they hasten to add: "There seems to be evidence that chastity belts were never worn but merely represent a hoax, deliberately or unwittingly perpetuated through their exhibition at places like museums and castles."[122]

Modern Reference Works on Eroticism and Sex

In light of a massive body of pseudo-scientific scholarship published since the late nineteenth century, and even considering quite serious research literature dealing with human sexuality and the various practices employed by individual cultures and people throughout time (anthropology and ethnography), it does not come as a surprise that the myth of the chastity belt happily lives on today and is so deeply ingrained that most people do not question its existence and blithely assume that it was indeed used by medieval knights. This is well, though not intentionally, demonstrated by Rufus C. Camphausen in his *Encyclopedia of Erotic Wisdom* (1991), although he did not include a separate entry on the chastity belt. The purpose of this *Encyclopedia* is, as the author states, "to provide easy, meaningful, and intelligent access to a variety of lesser-known facts concerning eros and sexuality, ranging from aphrodisiacs to ancient deities and demons, from erotic symbolism to lesser-known sexual techniques and exercises, from mystery schools and religious sects concerned with sexual activity to worship directed toward male and female energies and/or the genitals themselves."[123] Camphausen leaves no doubt about the serious nature of his reference work, as the careful documentation (extensive bibliography), cross-references, and illustrations indicate. Offering his book as an "encyclopedia," the author emphasizes repeatedly the factuality of the information assembled in this publication, for instance: "*The Encyclopedia of Erotic Wisdom* provides its readers with more than anthropological data regarding the erotic rituals, sexual techniques, and different moral outlook of lost or distant peoples" (2).

Camphausen would probably not have written his book if he had not been guided by a thoroughly positive approach to the human body and its sexual function. Quite naturally he expresses his fully justified outrage at such practices as circumcision, clitoridectomy, infibulation, subincision, and castration (e.g., 41). Although he does not include a separate entry for the chastity belt, he has certainly something to say about it, which might well be the best formulation of the modern myth concerning this gadget. This occurs in the entry for "infibulation," which he describes as follows: "The actual procedure consists first of cutting away the clitoral crown and hood as well as the labia minora. Then a part of the large lips are also cut

off, and the wounds are expected to close up the vagina's entrance except for a small and necessary opening. Often this is achieved by actually sewing the wound together, or sometimes by immobilizing the victim until it has closed by itself and adhesion has been completed" (82). The cruelty of this operation is unmistakable, and the author does not shy away from vehemently protesting against its practice, which is said to be applied to women particularly in Sudan, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Mali, and the whole of the Arabian peninsula (82; with a reference to a source from 1985). The reason for carrying out infibulation is obvious, to ensure male "possession" of the female sex. Camphausen's outrage is well justified, and the horrors of this torturous treatment of girls and young women do not need to be discussed here further. More interesting for our topic, the author also offers a comparison between infibulation and other operations realized by dominant males in many different societies: "The deformed feet of Chinese women, the *European* use of *chastity belts* (my emphasis), and other appalling practices that women have had to undergo in various cultures all seem comparatively lesser crimes when compared with infibulation and the psychological and physical pain and imprisonment it involves" (82).

My intent here is not to criticize Camphausen's certainly laudable attempt to discuss all aspects pertaining to human sexuality and its cultural history. But insofar as he only fleetingly refers to the chastity belt and describes it along with the Chinese practice of binding women's feet to conform to a certain type of aesthetic ideal appealing to male imagination, the author reveals the profound impact that the myth of the chastity belt continues to have on modern imagination. In fact, many other myths can be detected in this *Encyclopedia*, myths that derive from popular notions about the Middle Ages. One of these pertains to the institution of the Inquisition. The respective entry proves to be so grotesquely wrong that it is worth citing it at length because it clearly reveals how easily mythical concepts can dominate society even today, which in turn illustrates the basic reasons for the survival of the myth of the chastity belt until today: "General name for an enforcement agency comparable to the Nazi SS that was established by the Catholic church in 1229 in order to suppress whatever was deemed and declared a heresy. The Inquisition. . .used methods that included the torture, rape, burning, and drowning of its victims to keep the population within the fold of the 'holy church' " (83–84).[124]

Myths, as the name reveals, since time immemorial live on and can hardly ever be deconstructed because those who believe in them refuse to subject them to any critical analysis. By the same token, since the chastity belt represents a highly convenient, and erotic, icon of the "dark" Middle Ages and the "prurient," or lascivious culture of the Renaissance, it lent itself most effectively to fantasy concepts of the past. Fortunately, serious

medical research in the field of sexology has resisted the traditional temptation and thoroughly ignored this object as obviously not worthy of scientific investigations.[125]

Recent Research on the Chastity Belt: The Evidence of Art History and the History of Everyday Life

Surprisingly, modern research has shown hardly any sign of interest in the chastity belt and has allowed this myth to grow unabated among the nonacademic readership. William Chester Jordan tentatively and quite speculatively reflected on this mythical object: "It is possible that the extraordinary admiration of virginity and chastity in the Middle Ages together with the various 'tests' (such as ordeals) for these in medieval romances gave rise to the persistent belief that women, especially aristocratic women, were regularly tormented with chastity belt contraptions throughout the period."[126] The belief has been, indeed, very strong; indeed, so much so that we may even talk of mythical thinking with respect to this grotesque object. Other scholars, however, have argued more critically, though still without firm evidence to the contrary in their hand. To be effective at all, for instance, the chastity belt has to be applied tightly between the legs, making it impossible for the woman to wash herself, which immediately suggests that we are dealing with a myth primarily, as far as medieval chastity belts are concerned. Jean-Josef Brunner, a true expert of the history of keys, dedicated two pages in his book on *Der Schlüssel im Wandel der Zeit* (1988) to the chastity belt. Although he raises the specter of a historical myth in the chapter heading—"Schauermärchen oder Tatsache?" (horror story or fact)—both Kyeser's 1405 illustration and the testimony of the catalogue for the collection in the ducal palace in Venice from 1548—"Brage de Fero della moier del signor de Padoa"—plus a specimen of a sixteenth-century (?) chastity belt in the *Deutsches Schloss- und Beschlägemuseum* in Velbert, Germany (near Essen),[127] confirm, for him, that women at least since the fifteenth century were the poor victims of chastity belts: "Der Keuschheitsgürtel ist keine Blüte erotischer Vorstellungskraft, sondern traurige Tatsache" (The chastity belt is not the product of erotic imagination but a sad fact).[128]

However, apart from these few, highly questionable specimens, he also admits that sixteenth-century woodcuts and engravings used the chastity belt for symbolic purposes (214). Undoubtedly, Brunner's study is simply another example of the consequences of positivistic research. Neither irony nor satire, neither playfulness nor sexual fantasy as a possible explanation of this myth ever comes to his mind when he refers to a drawing of a chastity belt or to a metal object today housed in some museums, although

they cannot be dated with any accuracy and could be both recreations of original girdles or simply fakes. Brunner at least states unequivocally that chastity belts were not invented in or introduced during the Middle Ages because there are no references to this object prior to 1500 (214).

Eva Larraß now raises the most pertinent question how women in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, or any time thereafter, would have coped with their monthly menstruation, quite apart from endless other hygienic and serious health problems. She consequently asserts that chastity belts could not have been used before 1300, although she does not provide any idea what might have changed in basic living conditions that would have made the invention, or introduction of chastity belts from Italy, at about that time possible in the first place.[129] Without any corroborating evidence, Larraß then observes that Francesco Carrara (II, or Novellino) had allegedly invented and disseminated the chastity belt, though she qualifies her statement by emphasizing that "die Erfindung aus der Zeit der italienischen Renaissance stammt" (the invention dates back to the time of the Italian Renaissance).[130] Larraß also refers to Kyeser's technological codex from 1405, and to several specimens in various museums and collections.

Figure 6 Deutsches Schloss- und Beschlägemuseum, Velbert, Keuschheitsgürtel 1

Moreover, she relies on an entry in a modern German encyclopedia (*Brockhaus*), which has no significant value because of the highly speculative nature of the information provided there, as we could see earlier.

But another source proves to be of crucial value. Referring to the one and only female skeleton with a chastity belt ever found in an archeological dig, about which Dr. Pachinger had reported and which Dingwall and others had happily cited as ultimate proof for the existence of this contraption sometime in the past, Larraß emphasizes that this finding would require an entirely different interpretation. Alfred Kind, in his monograph, *Die Weiberherrschaft in der Geschichte der Menschheit*, for which famous art historian Eduard Fuchs had put together the illustration program,[131] had firmly identified this apparatus as a hip bandage to serve for the medical case of a *hernia cruralis*. Even practical experiments with a reconstructed chastity belt demonstrated, according to Larraß, that walking with it was possible only for fifteen minutes, after which serious chafing set in (5).[132]

After having referred to several seventeenth-century literary examples (Nicolas Chorier [Johannes Meursius] and Voltaire), Larraß speculates about the possible use of the chastity belt, without, however, having established its historical authenticity in the first place. She strongly rejects the idea that the girdle of chastity might have been used as a torture instrument (8), particularly because those specimens still available today are often equipped with silk and other valuable cloth to avoid skin wounds. But Larraß believes that the belt might have been used in women's convents as a disciplining instrument (9)—a most absurd notion which no writer or artist before her had ever considered, and for which there is no shred of evidence. But according to this author, the most likely option would be that the chastity belt had been the product of sexual perversions and served as a piece of erotic art to decorate the female genitalia (9).

Finally, Larraß suggests an entirely different explanation of the iconographic motif of the alleged chastity belt which might have been nothing but an apparatus worn by prostitutes who wanted to make sure that their customers gained access to their bodies only after they had paid the required amount of money, or a kind of entrance fee. This would allow a highly innovative interpretation of a notorious lithograph from 1520, which might have been created by Vogtherr the Younger, or some other contemporary artist (Albrecht Dürer or Hans Baldung Grien?). According to this reading, the young man gets the key after he has paid money for her sexual favor. This money immediately goes into the purse hanging at the old man's belt, who would be no one else but her pimp who makes sure he can control her service for his own profit (Larraß, 9).

As convincing as this reading might be, it still does not answer the question regarding the meaning of the verses written in scrolls on top of the

three figures, insofar as these suggest that the young woman is married to the old man. But the disconnect between text and image in this early-modern woodcut might not be entirely unusual, especially since the posture of all three figures support Larraß's interpretation.[133]

We can also add as supporting evidence for Larraß's thesis that other sixteenth-century artists such as Hans Sebald Beham (active from ca. 1550–67) employed similar iconographic motifs. In his woodcut "Old Man Caressing a Young Woman" an old man squeezes a prostitute's naked breast while she grabs money out of his purse which is placed on a window sill. She slightly pushes the old man back with her right hand, obviously in order to gain enough time to empty his purse, but she is not disinterested in his advances because he is a profitable customer. Although the young woman is richly dressed, her blouse is unbuttoned and she allows him to fondle her. Noticeably, she wears a heavy belt, but a padlock is not visible.[134] As a satirical complement to this woodcut, Beham also created a picture in which the situation is just the reverse: Old Woman Caressing a Young Man.[135] Here the young man takes money out of her huge bag, while she caresses his neck. Both are fully dressed, but the old woman wears a belt around her hip to which she has a purse attached, which might well be a deliberate allusion to a "chastity belt" worn by prostitutes. The satirical message of this woodcut is self-evident, especially because the age difference between both figures is so extreme. Significantly, however, the viewer's eye is immediately attracted to her belt and the padlock which dominates the lower right-hand corner of the woodcut.

Finally, Ludolph Büsinck offered a pictorial scene similar to Vogtherr's with his woodcut "The Procuress" (sixteenth century) where the young woman—again fully clothed—stands between the lover on the right side and the old procuress on the left, disregarding a fourth person in the left-hand background. Although we do not see any girdle or belt, the image clearly presents a scene of sexual bartering because the young woman has already passed a purse to the old woman, whereas the young man is entirely focused on the prostitute with whom he wants to play music, an obviously erotic allusion. He hands a flute to her, whereas he himself holds a booklet with musical scores on his lap, probably as a foreplay to their lovemaking.[136]

Admittedly, the motif of the prostitute does not show up many times in sixteenth-century art and literature, but it was also not entirely unknown, which could provide a convincing explanation for the falsely identified "chastity belt" on the prostitute's body. Further evidence, however, is lacking. Certainly, many cities issued sartorial legislation pertaining to prostitutes, but these mostly involved kerchiefs, sashes, caps, cloaks, striped hoods, and so forth.[137]

Larraß also suggests a similar interpretation of Melchior Schedel's ex libris, which would suddenly force us to identify most pictorial scenes of naked women who wear nothing but a belt to which a padlock is attached as protective gears for prostitutes. If this were the case, then Schedel's coat of arms would indicate that he had married a former prostitute whose large key would signal her return to the lifestyle of an honorable wife, as the cross hanging around her neck and the bourgeois head gear might symbolize (11).[138] Such an interpretation, however, takes an extremely opposite course and ignores a number of facts, such as her nakedness, his foolish appearance as half knight, and half nobleman, the strange appearance of the heads of black kids, and the two mighty horns on the helmet. Moreover, why would the artist proudly illustrate his wife's highly dubious social background and his own foolishness? Or should we read the appearance of the man as an emblem of youth combined with old age, whereas the naked woman would symbolize women's cunning and lustfulness, although they can always be bought with money, as Alexander Schulz has suggested?[139]

There is no doubt that Schedel had created a facetious scenery, and all our efforts to determine the small textile object around the woman's hip either as a chastity belt or as a prostitute's protective gear, are basically bound to be defeated. But since all scholarly efforts to make sense out of these humorous pictures do not reach the desired goal, those who argue for a mythical interpretation easily have their heyday. The problem always seems to rest in the satirical intent of the visual representation, since the combination of the chastity belt with the key, or its duplicate, probably only served an emblematic purpose and resulted from male fantasies about women's nymphomaniac inclinations. On this basis, then, those museum pieces were created—practically all of them produced sometime between the seventeenth and the nineteenth century—for the obvious reason of confirming the belief in the widespread use of such objects in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance period.[140]

Shortly after Larraß's study appeared Helmut Nickel's critical response which starkly illustrates the fundamental problem of modern research on the chastity belt. Nickel is only concerned with the material make-up of the chastity belts and insists that some of those discussed by Larraß appear to be made out of chain-links instead of simple textile fabric. In his curious effort to correct Larraß's comment that most of the chastity belts illustrated in sixteenth-century prints would not represent any serious hindrance for a rapist or another man who was the woman's lover, Nickel entirely ignores to question the basic nature of this iconographic motif and neglects to raise the crucial issue of whether chastity belts were ever used in reality. Nickel states: "Das schmiegsame Kettengeflecht war nicht nur unzerreißbar, selbst für ein 'beherztes Mannsbild,' sondern auch verhältnismäßig bequem im

Tragen, wie wohlausgeformte 'Bruochs' aus Kettengeflecht beweisen, die von vollausgerüsteten Rittern unter dem Harnisch zu tragen waren" (the flexible mail fabric could not only not be torn, not even by a "courageous, stout man," but it was also relatively comfortable to wear, as fully developed "pants" out of mail fabric demonstrate, which had to be worn by fully equipped knights under the armor).[141]

Even Dingwall did not, as Nickel emphasizes, recognize the significant difference between a chastity belt made out of cloth and one made out of chain mail (139), the former serving prostitutes as a simple cover for their pudenda, the latter serving as a chastity belt for wives whose husbands tried to protect them from unwelcome suitors. Nickel concentrates on one little detail in Melchior Schedel's exlibris, which cannot even been clearly identified in this sixteenth-century drawing, and tries to find parallel examples of knights' armor. He approaches his topic, however, simply upon the assumption that chastity belts were actually employed in premodern times, so he goes considerable lengths to develop an explanation how it might even have been possible for a woman in the Renaissance to wear such a contraption without suffering from serious chafing.

The myth itself, predicated on some images that are difficult to interpret as to their iconographic motifs, and on a number of dubious objects probably created in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, indeed lives on and deeply influences ever more scholars and other writers who do not even question the validity of the principal assumptions.

So it comes as no surprise that Eric Dingwall's influential, almost classical, study on this topic continues to exert far-reaching influence, as Reay Tanna Hill demonstrates in his certainly comprehensive (global) and well-illustrated study of the history of sex, in which he also focuses on the history of love (not sex!) in the Middle Ages. After having outlined in rough brush strokes the development of courtly love in medieval Europe, examining both secular love poetry (Guillaume le Neuf, Macabru, Andreas Capellanus, Jaufré Rudel, and Guillaume de Lorris) and theologically determined theory of love and marriage (Mariology, Thomas Aquinas), along with a quick reference to late-medieval witch craze, Tanna Hill suddenly addresses the chastity belt as well. Whereas he positively comments on the radical and fast-paced development in man's attitude toward woman during the years between 1100 and 1400, he also observes: "the new emphasis on virtue and morality had some unhappy side effects, especially among practical-minded burghers who locked up their money and saw no reason why they should not do the same with their wives."[142] This concern in protecting their wives from unwelcome sexual predators led the Italians to invent the chastity belt, hence the term "Florentine girdle" (276). Tanna Hill suspects that the original intent might have been

"a protection against rape, a common hazard in medieval times, but it proved a godsend to husbands who still subscribed to the age-old belief that women were natural wantons" (276).[143]

To confirm his argument regarding the historically verifiable application of the chastity belt he also includes an unidentified illustration which was obviously borrowed from Dingwall. As we can tell by now, this is the woodcut created by Heinrich Vogtherr the Younger, or some other contemporary artist (Peter Flötner, Hans Baldung Grien), who did not present a woman locked up with a chastity belt, but, as Larraß demonstrated,[144] a prostitute who receives money from the young man on the right and turns it over to her pimp, who subsequently would allow the young man to open the belt and enjoy the young woman's body. But Tanna Hill still reads this illustration in the same vein as Dingwall had done: "The faithless wife takes money from her husband's purse to give it to her lover, who already holds the key to her chastity belt" (276).

Irrespective of the highly problematic validity of this piece of evidence, Tanna Hill simply extends his study of the chastity belt to the twentieth century and comments that such objects "still figured (for men as well as women) in surgical instrument catalogues until at least as late as the 1930s, though their purpose by that time was to prevent masturbation" (277). Even more grotesquely, the author adds, as his final comment, even though only in a footnote, that tribal societies, such as the modern Nubians, apply even stricter forms of chastity control, and resort to infibulation (sewing up of the vagina) during the husband's absence (277).

The argumentative operation at work here proves to be identical with those strategies applied by anthropologists such as Heinrich Ploss and Max Bauer, and art historians such as Eduard Fuchs during the early twentieth century. For them, the chastity belt must have existed already in the Middle Ages because similar practices to preserve a woman's virginity and to control a wife's chastity were reported about many primitive tribes in Africa and elsewhere. The modern historian therefore jumps to the conclusion that such male barbarity against women must have been the norm in medieval European society as well. This analogy serves to develop an explanation for the numerous chastity belts housed today in museums and private collections Curiously, however, even Tanna Hill reveals a subtle degree of uncertainty and admits, in a segue to the following chapter: "Chastity belts or no, French and German historians are accustomed to refer to the fifteenth century as the age of bastards. . ." (277). In other words, the chastity belts did not work, and women were, especially during the fifteenth century, both victims of male sexual obsessiveness and of their own uncontrollable sexual desires, leading to a massive number of adultery cases. It goes without saying that all evidence for such a claim is missing here as well.

No wonder that the myth of the chastity belt has also developed deep roots in the Anglophone world if serious scholarly studies, such as Tanna Hill's *Sex in History*, contain such speculative observations about certain sexual practices in the past that easily prove to be mythical in nature.[145] Once such myths have entered common assumptions—a fundamental feature of myths in the first place—they become available as tools of reference to which everyone seems agreeable, although their existence is essentially based on fiction, as confirmed by Annette Lawson in her otherwise fine study of the literary theme of adultery in modern literature. Within the context of Eric Segal's novel *Man, Woman and Child*, David Lodge's *Small World*, and the film *A Touch of Class*, she finds it appropriate to allude to the medieval chastity belt: "There is nothing new about these altered boundaries for travel has always offered opportunities for otherwise forbidden sex as it would have done for those, usually the wives, who stayed at home—hence the chastity belt for the ladies of crusading knights."[146]

Modern art historians strongly suspect that practically all those objects exhibited in the museums and other collections, especially in medieval castles, such as the Marksburg near Koblenz, Germany, were fake. Timothy Wilson, for instance, though still heavily relying on Eric Dingwall's study, *The Girdle of Chastity*, seriously questions the authenticity of chastity belts: "The evidence for their use in the Renaissance period, however, is largely anecdotal or in burlesque fiction. It is probable that the great majority of examples now existing were made in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as curiosities for the prurient, or as jokes for the tasteless." As to the object held by the British Museum, he emphasizes: "This object is of uncertain date but may be an eighteenth- or early nineteenth-century concoction."[147]

The Literary and Historical Evidence, Revisited

For hundreds of years scholars, writers, poets, artists, and others have vehemently argued for the existence of the chastity belt, whether brought to Europe by the crusader knights or invented only in the fifteenth century to be used by jealous husbands. Surprisingly, the basic evidence for this claim proves to be rather slim. It is time to revisit the few important sources and to examine them from a modern perspective.

Marie de France—The Symbolic Belt and its Profound Misinterpretation

Many writers have perpetuated the idea that Marie de France (ca. 1160–ca. 1200) already included a reference to such an apparatus in

one of her *Lais*, "Guigemar."[148] If her testimony could be upheld as evidence, then the search for the medieval chastity belt would gain much support, especially since she wrote during the time of the crusades (the fourth took place in 1204) and hence she might have learned of such a mechanical girdle through a knight who had come back from the Holy Land.

Marie de France was one of the most sophisticated Anglo-Norman poets of her time, and she also stood at the forefront of medieval courtly literature. She has enjoyed considerable popularity even until today because of the delightful, highly symbolic nature of her *lais* and her *fables*.[149] She also composed the religious narrative *Espurgatoire seint Patritz* (The Purgatory of St. Patrick) and possibly *La vie seint Audree* (The Life of Saint Audree).[150] In the *lai* "Guigemar" the male protagonist Guigemar falls in love with an unhappily married young lady whose old husband keeps her like a prisoner in a tower next to the sea. Guigemar, wounded by an arrow that he had shot at a deer, which then had bounced back at him, hurting him badly, had arrived there by a magical ship. The lady heals his wound, but causes another in him, love. For a year, the two young people enjoy their time together, but one day, somehow anticipating that they will be detected, they exchange objects to each other that will serve as instruments to identify the respective other at a later time. She, being afraid of losing him to another woman, takes his shirt and ties a knot in its tail that only she would be able to undo. It is a symbol of her absolute love, as she says:

> Cungié vus doins, u ke ceo seit,
> D'amer cele kil defferat
> E ki despleier le savrat. (560–62)
>
> [You have my leave to love the woman,
> whoever she may be,
> who will be able to undo it.]

In return, he ties such a knot in a belt, or employs a buckle, that only he himself will eventually be able to unravel or unbuckle:

> Qu'el le face seür de li;
> Par une ceinture autresi,
> Dunt a sa char nue la ceint,
> Par mi le flanc aukes l'estreint:
> Ki la bucle purrat ovrir
> Sanz depescier e sanz partir,
> Il li prie que celui aint. (570–75)
>
> [that she should make a similar pledge to him,
> by means of a belt

that she would wear next to her bare flesh,
tightened about her flanks.
Whoever could open the buckle
without breaking it or severing it from the belt,
would be the one he would urge her to love.]

As expected, and necessary for the dramatic development of the narrative, the jealous husband discovers the lovers, threatens to kill Guigemar, but then allows him to flee with the magical ship, which had arrived just in time to convince the husband that Guigemar did not lie to him. Much later, after the lady has miraculously escaped from her husband and then has been taken prisoner by another king, Guigemar and his beloved meet again, and since each of them can untie the respective knot, they recognize and acknowledge each other as true lovers. But the king does not allow the lady to go and wants to keep her for himself. In a last effort Guigemar militarily overcomes the king, kills him, and is then reunited with his lady.

The belt, however, is not a chastity belt, neither in its appearance (girdle) nor in its purpose. The knot (buckle) is not to be equated with a padlock; instead it is a semiotic function through which Guigemar can publicly demonstrate that he is his lady's true lover. Moreover, the young man, and not the old husband, had given the belt as a gift to his lady. Certainly, she wears the belt on her body, but she allows many men to try to untie the buckle, which no one can do except Guigemar. The "knot" in the belt serves the same function as the knot in the shirt, inviting the lovers to find each other and to enjoy their love after they have discovered each other again after years of separation. Certainly, the knot prevents other men from gaining access to the lady's body, but none of them is her husband, and the belt does not protect her genitalia, as a chastity belt would. In other words, Marie de France does not utilize this object in sexual terms at all, rather as an instrument for Guigemar to demonstrate his true love and his ability to meet the challenge of the metaphorical knot, which basically proves to be an epistemological problem.[151] It also deserves to be pointed out that the belt is not a mechanical device to protect her chastity. On the contrary, Marie de France incorporated this belt into her narrative as the critically hermeneutic means to bring the two lovers together who have to demonstrate that they know how to read each other's signals of dedication. If anything at all, this belt then proves to be the very opposite of a chastity belt, and instead it might be associated with the virginal belt often referred to in classical literature, such as in Homer's *Iliad*, where the bride wears the girdle until her husband takes it off on their wedding night.[152]

Any attempt to construe this passage as a confirmation that such girdles of chastity had already been in place in the twelfth century turns out to be a

complete misunderstanding of the meaning of the literary discourse and plainly ignores all symbolic, allegorical, and even anagogical meaning of medieval texts, a sine qua non of all medieval literary studies.[153] As R. Howard Bloch now confirms:

> Nor can the attentive reader avoid the identity of the wound that is a plea with the plea or knot that, according to the traditional love ordeal, Guigemar and lady alone can untie as the guarantee of reaching each other. The shirttail that in the beginning stanches the wound ("De sa chemise estreitement / Sa plaie bende fermement," "He bound his wound firmly and tightly with his shirt" (v. 139)) is also a tangle of meaning, an undoable surplus of sense. The "plait" that is a pleat or a fold serves, in other words, and this according to Marie's own thesis concerning obscurity, as a reminder not only that the letter, as in the ordeal of the series of ladies who try to undo Guigemar's knot, remains closed. . ., but, once again, that desire is a function of the pleat's closedness: "amur est plai[e de]denz cors" (v. 482). Which comes to be read, finally, as "Desire is a wound, knot, pleat, or plea in the body, or in the (textual) corpus."[154]

A sensitive reading of Marie de France's *Guigemar* demonstrates that the belt itself has only allegorical meaning, especially since the belt guarantees the purity of love between the two young people, while all those who fail to open the belt are determined by nothing but sexual desires and treat women in a violent manner.[155] By contrast, Guigemar, the true lover, is the only one who knows how to open the symbolic knot and win the lady's heart.

Admittedly, there is a certain resemblance with the image of the chastity belt as projected by modern scholarship into the past, but the knot itself gives away the particular meaning, namely its hermeneutic function, allowing only the true lovers to get together, basically in the meaning given to the knot by Geoffrey of Vinsauf in his *Poetria Nova*: "Signa revelant nodum juncturae" (signs that reveal the knot of a [narrative] binding).[156] The fabled girdle of chastity, as conceived by myth-makers throughout time, was a simple control mechanism to fight against the development of love outside of the bonds of marriage. Insofar as Guigemar gives this belt to his lady, he prepares the ground for both of them, just as in the case of the knotted shirt, to find each other again and to reveal their innermost feelings for the respective other. The symbolism of the "knot" ought not to be confused with the material function of the "padlock," insofar as the first encapsulates love and makes possible its realization, whereas the second stands in for absolute control and subjugation by a jealous husband who has commodified his wife into a property that he commands via the marriage bond and, more important, especially considering his personal weakness as a husband, the chastity belt. As Nancy Vine Durling has observed, "the knot and the belt are a rich locus of meaning in *Guigemar*. They bind together the

sens or sententia of the *lai* which makes use of a *conte breton* to represent the role of the female writer. . . Marie's text (like the belt and the knot) is both open and closed. Like the belt, the *lai* is circular, non-ending, capable of infinite repetition (retelling); like the knot it is open and anticipates the closure provided by its juxtaposition with the other *lais*."[157]

The motif of the belt as a semiotic riddle that serves to identify the true lovers and to bond them through an interpretive challenge (knot in the textile = knot in the text) is used a second time in another *lai* by Marie de France, although not one of the many writers dealing with the chastity belt has ever noticed it. In *Eliduc*, the daughter of the king of Exeter has passionately fallen in love with Eliduc although she hardly knows him and has only heard of his outstanding knightly accomplishments on behalf of her father besieged by a suitor for his daughter. One day she summons him to her for a visit, which is enough to make her fall head over heels for him. Her chamberlain recommends her to send Eliduc a ring and a belt as a sign of her love, which she does. Eliduc accepts both objects and puts them on his body, without saying much to the chamberlain:

Li chevaliers l'ad mercïee,
L'anelet d'or mist en sun dei,
La ceinture ceinst entur sei;
Ne li vadlez plus ne li dist
Ne il nïent ne li requist
Fors tant que del suen li offri.
Cil n'en prist rien, si est parti. (408–14)[158]

[The knight thanked him.
He put the gold ring on his finger
pulled the belt around him;
the youth said no more,
nor did Eliduc ask anything,
except that he offered him something of his.
But the chamberlain took nothing and departed.]

But Eliduc is deeply tortured by the conflict between the oath of loyalty he had sworn to his wife back home and his new love (466–77). Nevertheless, he already wears her symbolic gifts of love and has bound himself to her through wearing the belt. When he sees her again he thanks her for the gifts, which he regards as being most valuable both in material and symbolic terms: "Unques mes n'ot aveir si chier!" (507; he'd never had anything more precious). This assurance emboldens her to confess her love for him:

"Pur ceo li enveiat l'anel
E la ceinturë autresi

Que de sun cors l'aveit seisi;
Ele l'amat de tel amur,
De lui volt faire sun seignur. (510–14)

[that was why she'd sent the ring
and the belt as well,
for he had taken possession of her being.
She loved him with such love
that she wanted to make him her lord;]

The belt represents the dedication to love that bonds them intimately, and it explains why Eliduc forgets about his wife and can only think of his new love which has entirely overpowered him emotionally.

In the Middle High German heroic epic *Nibelungenlied* (ca. 1200) the protagonist Siegfried forcefully takes Brunhild's ring and belt as signs of his physical victory over her during the second wedding night, subjugating this monster woman for her actual husband, Gunther. Whereas before she had proven to be the strongest person in the entire world, perhaps even powerful enough to overcome Siegfried who fights against her with the help of his magical cape that provides him with the additional strength of twelve men, the hero's wrath—and also his fear that his defeat at the hand of Brunhild would bring about the submission of all men—had given him enough energy to defeat this matriarchal figure. Subsequently he takes Brunhild's ring and belt, and so steals her magical power. But this belt bears no similarity to a chastity belt, neither in its shape, as far as we can tell, nor in its symbolic function.[159] In radical contrast, in Marie's narrative, both objects are given freely as signs of love, and Eliduc happily and voluntarily accepts them, putting them on his own body, which is thus bonded with Guilliadun for ever. Fitting for Marie's symbolic language, at the end when Eliduc's wife has found out the truth of her husband's new love, she takes the veil and withdraws into a convent, freeing Eliduc from the old bond with her, a most fascinating exchange of textiles or parts of clothing representing the legal and ethical dimension of love Marie is deeply concerned with. To be sure, neither the belt in *Guigemar* nor the belt in *Eliduc*—just as in the *Nibelungenlied*—bears even the faintest similarity with a chastity belt, and both narratives force us to reject outright all traditional interpretations along those lines as complete speculations resulting from an erroneous correlation between the erotic symbol of the belt as a medium to communicate love and sexual desires and the chastity belt as a medium to control and subjugate a wife's sexuality.[160]

German Minnesong (ca. 1170) and Old occitan Troubadour Poetry (Early Twelfth Century)

A contemporary female poet, whose identity has not yet been determined, but who was certainly a nun in the Benedictine convent of Tegernsee in Southern

Bavaria, composed a short poem that seems to indicate a general awareness of chastity belts, but in reality only confirms the symbolic, or allegorical, use of this object in courtly love discourse.[161] She writes, in her most famous poem:

Dû bist mîn, ich bin dîn.
des solt dû gewis sîn.
dû bist beslozzen
in mînem herzen,
verlorn ist daz sluzzelîn:
dû muost ouch immêr darinne sîn.[162]

You are mine, I am yours,
you can be certain of that.
You are locked up
in my heart,
lost is the little key:
You have to stay therein for ever.

The metaphor of the belt has been used quite commonly since antiquity, and so also in the Middle Ages, as reflected in this sparse, yet truly timeless and beautiful poem, but we cannot establish any connections between the idea of love dealt with here to the mythical notion of the "chastity belt"[163] because the elements of the jealous husband, adultery, some kind of a control mechanism, and crude sexuality are missing.[164] However, as a love poem it contains the fundamental features common to all true love poems, that is, involving two partners in love with each other, their desire, longing, and secrecy here expressed through the imagery of the heart and the key.

Another example for this literary phenomenon, contained already in Old Occitan poetry, can be found in the songs composed by Guilhem de Poitiers (1071–1129), also known as William IX of Aquitaine, although the idea of the chastity belt, at least as understood in modern terminology as an object to control a woman's sexuality by means of a mechanical instrument, is even further removed here. Nevertheless, Guilhem announces in the *tonrada* (concluding stanza) of his "Farai un vers de dreit nien" that he would send his song to another person who would pass it on to another near Anjou where his beloved lives. She then would be informed about his need for her love and would send him the counterkey: "Que·m.tramezes del sieu estui / La contraclau" (So that she might send me, for her coffer, / the counterkey).[165] The complete stanza reads:

Fait ai lo vers, no sai de cui:
Et trametrai lo a celui
Que lo·m· trametra per autrui
Enves Anjau,

Que· m· tramezes del sieu estui
La contraclau.

And here is Bond's translation:
I've done the song, about whom I don't know;
And I'll send it over to the one
Who will send it for me through another
Toward Anjou,
So that (she) might send me a copy of the key
To her coffer.

But Guilhem is not absolutely interested in the sexual aspect, that is, in gaining access to her feminine body. Instead, as Karen Sullivan now concludes, he is more keen to access "the copy of the key to that coffer. He identifies as the object of his desire not the end to which he presumably seeks access but, rather, the counterfeit means by which he stands to gain access to that end."[166] As much as the key symbolizes the quest for her love, however, the poetic strategy also implies an epistemological quest for which the imagery of a locked garden and the fitting key works exceedingly well. To quote Sullivan once again: "Ultimately, in Guilhem's poetry, the excessiveness of the erotic, which necessarily transgresses social boundaries, is related to the excessiveness of his signification."[167] The troubadours Marcabrut and Bernart Marti also utilized the imagery of the counterkey, "referring to access to a lady by someone other than the husband,"[168] but despite the erotic symbolism, it would be absurd to draw the conclusion that this erotic-poetic object suggested a chastity belt. Martín de Riquer concurs with this interpretation, though he bases his argument on the equally naive assumption that chastity belts were not invented until the early fifteenth century during the Italian Renaissance—probably, though he does not mention a name, by Francesco II "Novellino."[169] But depending on the manuscript version, Guilhem's last stanza might also read, according to the version in ms. C, and used by Frede Jensen in his edition: "que· m· tramezes del sieu estuy / la contraclau," which he translates as: "so that he may send back to me the pass-key / to his treasure."[170] The decision to use these personal pronouns might be questionable, particularly because they are in radical contradistinction to the editorial choice by Riquer and others, but Jensen's observation regarding the meaning of the stanza can only be supposed: "Guillaume's poem is a riddle, which he asks a friend to solve, and the word *contraclau* may thus have been chosen as a metaphor for the solution."[171] There is no doubt that the key serves as an essential metaphor for this and the Middle High German love poem, and was used in many other narrative contexts as well, as our subsequent discussion will illustrate. To be sure, there is no shred of evidence for a reading of *contraclau* as a "chastity belt." But both examples already point us

in the right direction for the ultimate explanation of why and how the myth of the chastity belt developed especially during the nineteenth century when the Middle Ages were rediscovered and quickly utilized for anachronistic purposes.

The Girdle as Metaphor in Late-Medieval French Literature: Guillaume de Machaut (ca. 1300–77)

At the end of the Middle Ages, Guillaume de Machaut also seems to have toyed with the poetic idea of the key as a symbol of love.[172] In his monumental *dit amoureux*, the *Voir Dit* (1363–65; 9,009 lines with intercalated prose letters), the young lover has to leave his lady behind after a joyful encounter described with thinly revealed references to the sexual act, as the male voice, addressing his beloved, indicates: "A .ij. amans na creature / Nulle si plaisant aventure / Si douce na tant donneste / Comme ceste ci a este" (4204–07; I don't believe / An adventure this pleasant could ever / Befall two lovers or anyone else, / Not one as sweet, not one as upright / As this one has been).[173] The woman likewise expresses her great happiness and love, assuring him that she will never love anyone else: "Ne iamais en iour de ma vie / Je naray dautre amer envie" (4230–31; Never a day in my life / Will I feel the desire to love some other). He also pledges his profound love, at which point she hands him a small key as a token of her commitment.

This passage was so important both for Bonneau and Dingwall, among others, that they all refer to it as proof of the existence of the medieval chastity belt. Indeed, some of the imagery in this poem seems to lend itself to such an interpretation, which justifies us to cite it again, but now in length, and this time from the most recent historical-critical edition, along with an English translation:

Adont la bele macula indent. . .
Et mis son bras a mon col a
Et ie de ·ij· bras lacolay
Et mis son autre a mon col ay
Si attaingni une clavette
Dor · et de main de maistre faite
Et dist ceste clef porterez
Amiz · et bien la garderez
Car cest la clef de mon tresor
Je vous en fais seigneur des or
Et desseur tous en serez mestre
Et si laim plus que mon oueil destre
Car cest monneur cest ma richesse

Cest ce dont puis faire largesse
Par vos dis · ne ne puet descroistre
La clef pris et li affermay
Dou bien garder · car moult lamay
Puis pris un annel en mon doy
Et li donnay faire le doy
Lors en souspirant congie pris
De ma douce dame de pris
Car pour le soleil qui venoit
De la partir me convenoit (4236–59)

[At this the beauty embraced me,
Putting her arm round my neck,
And I embraced her with both my arms
And around my neck placed her other.
Then she took hold of a small key
Made from gold by a craftsman's hand,
Saying: "Carry this key with you,
Darling, and guard it well,
For it's the key to my treasure.
From this moment on I make you
Its lord and master above all others.
And this I love more than my right eye
Because it's my honor, my riches;
With this I can be generous.
Your verses cannot diminish it,
Which instead only increases each day."
I took the key, affirming to her
That I, esteeming it highly, would guard it well.
Then I took hold of a ring on my finger
And gave it her, as I should do.
Afterwards, sighing, I took leave
From my worthy lady,
For the sun, coming up,
Obliged me to part from there.]

The text never says anything about a belt, though the key implies a lock, which has often been described as a symbolic image of the impermeability and unchangeability of love, not to mention its profound theological, philosophical, political, and material symbolism since antiquity.[174] Moreover, in clear contrast to the basic concept of the chastity belt, the two young people have enjoyed each other and promised to keep their vows of love for each other. The key cannot mean anything else but a symbol of this very love, in full concordance with the basic principles of medieval courtly love which have nothing in common with marital relationships and subsequent chastity belts.[175] Moreover, the parallels to the

examples in Marie de France's *lai* and to the Middle High German poem are striking and convincing, forcing us to reject any of their testimonies as possible support for the claim that the Middle Ages knew of and used the chastity belt. Both Dingwall and Bonneau, to name just these two authors, have grossly misread these literary documents and fell prey to a simplistic, positivistic interpretation, whereas the deeper meaning of the key symbolism can be easily detected if we approach these poems from a critical perspective and with a healthy dose of skepticism regarding the popular myth concerning alleged medieval sexual perversions within marriage.[176]

Dietrich von der Glezze's Der Borte (ca. 1266–96)

One of the most fascinating examples of the symbolic function of a belt can be found in Dietrich von der Glezze's Middle High German verse narrative, *Der Borte* in which a young wife allows a mysterious knight to sleep with her in return for all his valuable trappings, including a magical belt. The wearer of this belt cannot be defeated by an opponent, hence he would be guaranteed knightly honor. The woman eventually accepts the offer because she wants to win this belt for her husband and is willing to pay this high price for the belt. Unfortunately, a servant observes the wife having sex with the other knight in the garden, and he reports this to his lord, Konrad. The latter is so disappointed and downtrodden about his wife's infidelity during his absence that he does not return home; instead he leaves the country and spends his time at the court of the Duke of Brabant.

His wife waits for two years, to no avail, then she disguises herself as a knight, travels to Brabant, and impresses everyone, especially her husband, who has not recognized her, with her outstanding chivalry and prowess, and with the wondrous achievements of her/his hunting animals. But Konrad begs his new "friend" to give him as a gift the marvelous dogs, or the hunting hawk, all of which his wife had originally gained for him, bartering her body for these animals and the belt. However, no one knows about this belt, and she does not divulge its secret either. Upon Konrad's intensive pleading she finally agrees to give him the hawk if he would truly fulfil his/her wishes. Surprisingly, this wish consists in having sex with him/her, which Konrad naturally reads as an indication that his friend is homosexual, one of the worst sins for medieval society.[177]

Grudgingly he agrees to this request, but in the last moment his wife reveals her true identity, though she is furious at Konrad's immoral readiness to sell his body so cheaply and to succumb to shame and dishonor in return for the hunting bird. Her husband begs for forgiveness, and his wife accepts him again, because she loves him and had intended to let him have all the spoils from her adulterous affair anyway.[178]

The crucial icon in this narrative proves to be, as the title indicates and as the introductory verses also specify, the belt: "Ich bin der Borte genant, / hubschen luten sol ich sin bekant" (1–2; I am called the Belt and ought to be well known among courtly people). But there are two belts, the one that she wears from the beginning, and the one that she acquires from the knight in return for sexual favor. The narrator makes clear that her first belt serves as a pointer, or as the external pars pro toto, so to speak, of her genitalia, but perhaps also of her heart and mind: "under ir gurtel stunt ein stein, / der was clar unde rein" (61–62; underneath her belt there was a stone which was bright and clean).

Let us return to the original scene of bartering. The foreign knight who arrives at the garden where the lady rests during her husband's first absence, immediately falls under the spell of her beauty, and in the evening, after having spent all afternoon with her in the relaxed atmosphere of the *locus amoenus*, he wants to have sex with her. However, she adamantly refuses, and does not want to accept, as payment, his miraculous hunting dogs, his hawk, or his horse, each of which exceeds all other animals in their physical skills. Only when the knight adds his magical belt to the bargain, does she change her mind. This belt has the unique power to grant victory to its wearer in every battle: "swer den borten umbe hat / da der stein inne stat, / der wirdet nimmer eren bloz" (307–09; he who wears the belt, upon which this gem is bossed, will never fail in his honor). Indeed, as the subsequent events demonstrate, this comes true when she herself wears the belt and triumphs over all knightly opponents, and can also defeat, symbolically speaking, her husband, who would even give his body for a homosexual act in return for the dogs and the hawk. The narrator explicitly confirms that Heinrich, the wife's pseudonym, had overcome, or defeated, Konrad when he won the joust against the British knight, who in turn had beaten Konrad before. The reason, however, why the wife demonstrates so much strength is obvious: she wears the belt, "der mir gibet hohen mut" (784; which fills me with high spirits). But once the denouement has occurred, which also spares Konrad of the sin of committing a homosexual act, and frees his wife from the valid blame of having committed adultery, she turns the belt, and the animals, over to her husband, and they enjoy a happy married life until their death.

There is no doubt that the belt carries a strong sexual symbolism, but despite its remote similarity with a chastity belt, its function and practical use bespeak the very opposite. The knight grants it to her in order to enjoy sex with her, and she wears it to secure her physical superiority over all men; finally she lets Konrad have it, who then supposedly wears it himself for the rest of his life.

Many medieval poets, such as Dietrich von der Glezze and Marie de France (ca. 1190), then Wirnt von Grafenberg in his post-classical Arthurian

romance *Wigalois* (ca. 1210–ca. 1230), but also the anonymous poets of the Middle High German heroic epic *Nibelungenlied* (ca. 1200) and of the Middle English alliterative poem, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (ca. 1350–1400), to name a few, freely operated with and utilized the belt as a central icon for courtly love and courtly ideals, and also suggested that the belt would give the wearer superhuman strength.[179] In other words, the girdle naturally invited a symbolic or allegorical reading throughout the Middle Ages. In light of this observation it does not come as a surprise that poets and artists in subsequent centuries adopted this object so important for clothing as a symbol of sexual jealousy and of a husband' impotence. Particularly in the case of Dietrich's *Borte* we can discover that the belt assumes a metonymical function for the female sexual organs, notwithstanding the additional symbolic reference to her honor or spirit. This might explain why later satirists and social critics referred back to this object and adapted it for the opposite purpose, though this strategy was still not based on any factual employment of the girdle of chastity. This seems to be the most logical and convincing explanation for the emergence of the myth of the chastity belt, and it seems to reconfirm convincingly that the Middle Ages had nothing to do with this curious object or with the development of the myth.

The Chastity Belt as Reflected in Late-Medieval German Material Culture: Conrad Kyeser's Bellifortis (1405)

The only truly noteworthy, and at first sight reliable, source for a chastity belt in pictorial terms seems to be Conrad Kyeser's *Bellifortis* (Strong War), a late-medieval handbook of military technology. Kyeser (August 26, 1366–1405?), who originated from Eichstätt in Bavaria, dedicated the final version of his luxuriously illustrated treatise to the German King Ruprecht of the Palatine on June 23, 1405. Kyeser mentions that this was an improved copy, though we do not have the original anymore. But even the Göttingen manuscript, cod. ms. phil. 63, was not entirely completed, as indicated by a number of gaps in the text and by missing pictures.[180] This highly detailed and meticulously designed reference work for war technology, which primarily focuses on siege instruments and war carts, also includes a number of drawings of other objects, such as a mill, machinery for the construction of a building, an air mattress, a floating belt, and paddle for the safe crossing of a body of water, a lantern, and also a chastity belt.[181] Kyeser culled much material from classical and medieval authors, especially from the *Liber ignium ad comburendos hostes* (ca. 1250), ascribed to a Marcus Graecus, and he apparently intended to summarize all knowledge available to him concerning weapons, siege instruments, but also everyday machines and instruments for torture and household use. The illustrations

in *Bellifortis* later served as a model for the first printing of Vegetius' s (fourth century c. CE) *Epitoma rei militaris* in 1471.[182]

Typical for his time, Kyeser enjoyed projecting a kind of aura surrounding his work, which includes a number of highly fanciful objects, recipes for magical operations (making a person invisible or invulnerable), and he added several comical comments and images of obviously dreamed-up gadgets. For instance, the explanation concerning the floating belt emphasizes that the best method to inflate this belt would be to utilize the wind coming from the behind (farts). This also might explain the inclusion of the chastity belt into this significant, monumental reference work dedicated to late-medieval war technology.[183] It has survived in four manuscripts and twelve paper manuscripts from the fifteenth century.[184]

Kyeser's picture of a chastity belt (Universitätsbibliothek Göttingen, ms. philos. 64, 130ra) seems to be the earliest illustration of such a contraption and shows surprising mechanical details concerning the lock and the metal bands. Its identification as "Florentinarum" (for Florentine women) implies its exotic and humorous nature and might well have been nothing but the product of Kyeser's erotic fantasy.[185] On fol. 124ra, where a new chapter begins, Kyeser describes the subsequent illustrations as follows:

> Clausuras quadrupedum bracile florentinarum
> Jocus ligat seriem perpulchram congeriem
> Hec trado juvenibus nobilibus morigeratis.
>
> [The padlocks for the quadrupeds, the aprons for the Florentine women.
> The joke connects the sequence, across a beautiful collection.
> I dedicate this to the young men who are noble and obedient.][186]

Indeed, a careful analysis of this object quickly demonstrates that modern writers have entirely misunderstood the purpose of Kyeser's drawing.[187] It is a hilarious, but entirely unpractical, in fact impossible apparatus that would never fit on any human body. The drawing, however, proves to be impressive in its details, in the careful outline of the individual metal pieces, albeit they all fit together so tightly that it would be foolish to believe that Kyeser indeed had a real chastity belt in mind. But the *Bellifortis* also includes an illustration of an instrument to remove a penis (castration), which is grouped together with other torture instruments. As the accompanying text states:

> Istud iacibulum ex forti coreo factum
> Manu sustenatur sed curvum ferrum mittatur
> In parte tibi nota equitans a parte remota
> Corrigia media bracchio bene sit alligata
> Et trahe quantum potes tuo pede trudere notes

Pedem sic spadonis quadratus subito cadit

[Take this tearing instrument, made out of strong leather
tightly into your hand, whereas the iron hook
is to be put around the well-known body part, so that it fits well on it.
Then tightly wrap the middle belt around your arm,
and pull as hard as you can; pay attention to place your foot
against the foot of the man who is to be castrated. His testicles will come off immediately.][188]

Is the author fooling us here, or was this instrument really intended for the described purpose? Would it truly have achieved the desired effect to carry out a rapid and successful castration, or is there a certain irony behind this torture object? Why would he have included such a gadget in his extensive study of war machinery? The penalty of castration might have been applied to condemned homosexuals, but Kyeser offers no comment on the judicial context and leaves us entirely guessing as to the seriousness of his illustrations. What would be the relationship between those machines designed to break through a wall and this curious contraption for which, as far as I know, there are no parallels? Most likely, this entire section in Kyeser's *Bellifortis* has to be read as tongue-in-cheek, which clearly explains the inclusion of the chastity belt as well, an erotic joke based on common male sexual imagination.

The text accompanying the chastity belt itself reads:

Est florentinarum hoc bracile dominarum
Ferreum et durum ab antea sit reseratum

[This is an apron worn by Florentine ladies,
made of iron, and hard, to be locked from within.]

The adverd "ab antea" (in advance), as copied in the parchment version, does not make much sense, so the editor used "ab intra" as it says in the various paper manuscripts, meaning "from within."[189] Either way, the ironic tone cannot be overheard, which supports our reading of this most famous illustration in the history of the chastity belt as a humorous object to poke fun at the Italians and their allegedly loose morality and unusual sexual practices.

One could object that Kyeser's drawing also shows a slide key hanging from the cross bar, and that there are several joints in the entire belt, providing it with the necessary flexibility to attach it to a body, though there is no padlock. However, despite the seemingly realistic depiction of a chastity belt, we cannot deduce at all with the desirable clarity and forcefulness that this was an object to be used in reality. Instead, the opposite seems to be the case, particularly because there are no openings for a

woman's basic bodily needs. After all, the illustration is included in a whole chapter dedicated to facetious objects, clearly signaling that Kyeser was not serious at all, at least not with respect to the chastity belt.[190]

However, the one and only significant historian of keys as art objects and mechanical tools, Jean-Josef Brunner, assumes that chastity belts were used at least since the fifteenth century because of Kyeser's depiction, a copy of which is included in Brunner's study, accompanied by the photo of a sixteenth-century chastity belt. But the author admits himself that such a belt would have caused huge problems of hygiene, casting serious doubt on the historical veracity of both the object and the image.[191] We could easily add many more arguments undermining this myth, but this would be, at least by now, like carrying owls to Athens.

But a curious, so far not quite explainable example of a male (!) chastity belt—if we can call it that—is also mentioned in the letters by the monk and humanist Rutger von Sponheim (1456–ca. 1517) and deserves to be considered here as well, precisely because Rutger offers fairly similar information as Kyeser, reflecting a certain naive credulity and yet curiosity in all kinds of new "scientific" inventions and discoveries. In his report about the famous Benedictine abbot and historian, Johannes Trithemius (1462–1516), so well known for his first-hand information about the notorious Dr. Johann Faustus,[192] he relates that the latter had investigated a type of metal contraption used as punishment for monks and priests who had been caught in flagrante with a woman. The instrument was to be placed on the penis and pressed the testicles together; further, an iron weight was attached, which could not be removed without the help of a blacksmith. Trithemius was said to have acquired several of these gadgets to study them in detail and to learn how he could free himself in case it might be applied to his body. The idea underlying this instrument would have been similar to a chastity belt for women, but the source informing us about it is not trustworthy and indicates a certain degree of satire or plain fantasy concerning alleged torture instruments.[193]

The Chastity Belt in Italian Renaissance Literature

If Kyeser indeed had intended to ridicule his Italian contemporaries, we might expect numerous references to the chastity belt in late-medieval Italian prose novellas, such as in Boccaccio's *Decameron* (ca. 1350) or Franco Sacchetti's *Trecento Novelle* (ca. 1360 or 1370). This is, however, not the case. Boccaccio, the great Renaissance writer, for instance, most commonly identified with his wonderful collection of ironic and satirical tales in the *Decameron*—there, however, we find no example of a chastity

belt—mentions an innocuous *ingulum castitatis* in Book Nine of his *Genealogia Deorum Gentilium* (1350–60), but again not at all in terms of its possibly erotic meaning. On the contrary, for Boccaccio it only symbolizes divine chastity:

> Et inde Cynthia, quod lune nomen est, dicebatur, quod ipsa a *virginibus cingulum* castitatis, dum viris iungerentur, exolveret, quod, quicquid dicant isti, Veneris hoc ego officium puto, quam, Alberico teste, dicebant Iunonem *Domiducam* in nuptiis sequi, eo quod Iunonis esset officium primo ad matrimonium spectantia agere; Veneris vero virum et virginem in coitum inugere, et cingulum virginitatis solvere, quod ipsi Veneri tribuunt, et *ceston* vocant.
>
> [Therefore she was called Cynthia, which is the name of the moon, as she removes the chastity belt from the virgins when they join in union with men. But this, I believe, whatever the others might say, should be the office of Venus, who, as Albericus testifies, was said to follow in the wedding of Juno *Domiducam* because it was Juno's office in the first place to deal with everything concerning the marriage. However, it was Venus's task to unite, during the coitus, man and virgin, which they ascribe to Venus and call "cestos"].[194]

It would be entirely impossible to draw any conclusions from this allegorical use of the word "chastity belt" and relate it to the curios object allegedly used by jealous husbands on their wives since the Renaissance.

Even more amazingly, the extensive, multivolume *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature*, published by Stith Thompson, and reedited many times, does not know of any chastity belt, except for one case in Renaissance Italian literature.[195] This one is identified in the *Motif-Index of the Italian Novella in Prose*, and it truly seems to be highly exceptional, if not unique within the long history of late-medieval and early-modern Italian *novelle* (ca. 300 years).[196] About twenty-five years after Geoffrey Chaucer—who likewise never mentions a chastity belt—had completed his *Canterbury Tales* (ca. 1399/1400), Giovanni Sercambi (1348–1424) put together his *Novelle*, a collection of 155 erotic and didactic tales.[197] According to Rotunda's *Motif-Index* (1942), the ninety-second novella was supposed to contain the theme of a chastity belt. Modern scholarship, however, has thoroughly reevaluated the manuscript situation of Sercambi's *Novelle*, and each of the two recent historical-critical editions number the one narrative of interest to us differently.[198] As Luciano Rossi emphasizes, correctly observing the singular character of the narrative motif: "la novella, tutta imperniata sul motivo della 'cintura di castità' e sul tema del 'chi la fa l'aspetti', non ha precisi antecedenti letterari, ma si svolge secondo i moduli della narrazione oggettuale, priva di enfasi, cara al Sercambi cronista" (the novella, entirely based on the motif of the "chastity belt" and on the theme: "you are responsible for your own life," does not have precise literary antecedents, but it

develops according to the models of the objective narrative, without any [particular] emphasis, typical of the chronicler Sercambi).[199]

Since "Di uno Marco da Castello" stands out so much as the one and only medieval, or rather, early-modern narrative where the motif of the chastity belt surfaces, it seems appropriate first to summarize its content, before we turn to its interpretation.

The Venetian textile maker Marco da Castello enjoys many physical contact with women outside of his marriage and is therefore afraid that he also will be cuckolded one day. Out of jealousy ("di gelosia pieno") he creates an iron chastity belt, and after he has married the young woman Rovenza, he tells her that she needs to wear this contraption. He requests Rovenza to accept the belt out of love for him, and attaches this monstrosity to her body without any compunctions. She bitterly complains about it and asks why she has deserved this penalty: "or questa pena perché vuoi tu che io porti?" (1035; as penalty for what (sin) do you want me to wear it?). The narrator does not employ the term "cintura di castità;" instead he utilizes the expression "brachieri di ferro" (1035; iron frame), but it is the same object. Marco admits that his young wife has not done anything wrong, but his own jealousy prods him to force her to wear this belt. But he applies a double standard, having slept with many wives and now wants to avoid that another man might cuckold him in turn. She has no power to resist him, and the couple enjoys its life together, he always unlocking the belt each time they want to sleep with each other. This continues for several years, when she finally complains bitterly about the belt which threatens to kill her. Indeed, she is seriously ill and soon passes away. When her parents, who take care of the burial, discover the chastity belt on her body, they protest loudly. The news quickly spread in Venice, but Marco defends himself and insists on his patriarchal power to do whatever pleases him: "che io farò pure a mio modo" (1036). Soon after, Marco marries again, this time a very intelligent young woman, Fiandina. All her friends warn her against this terrible husband who would want to treat her as he did his previous wife, Rovenza, but Fiandina assures them that she would know how to handle this jealous man: "io lo pagherò dell' opre come già sono stati pagati de li altri" (1037; I'll pay him back for these works as the others have been paid). The wedding takes place, and the couple spends the first night together. In the morning, Marco wants to put the chastity belt on his wife's body and lock it: "e con questa chiave lo vo' chiudere" (1037; and with this key I want to lock you). Fiandina, who has indeed learned from Rovenza's experience, agrees to accept the belt, but only the next day so that she can dance better during the festivities. Secretly she calls a former lover, the Paduan tailor Votabotte, and pleads for his help, because she wants to continue their love affair. The next morning, when Marco

intends to apply the chastity belt to his wife's body, she gestures to Votabotte to enter the house secretly. She has retired to a small balcony overlooking a canal, and asks Marco to approach her there with the belt. In that moment she hits him so hard that he falls into the canal and drowns, with the chastity belt still in his hand. Fiandina and Votabotte take as much money as they can grab and escape from Venice. When the parents find out what has happened, they can only retrieve Marco's body from the water, who is still holding the "brachieri" in his hands (1038). As the cause of his death they determine that his own attempt to apply the chastity belt to his wife was responsible: "Marco esser morto per voler mettere lo brachieri alla moglie" (1039). Consequently, the parents take possession of Marco's property, whereas the young woman and her love enjoy their life outside Venice.

What can we make out of the clear reference to a chastity belt in this narrative? Would it serve as proof that such objects in fact existed in the late Middle Ages? Does Sercambi offer the silver bullet to demonstrate that there was, indeed, more to this myth than just male sadistic fantasy?[200] After all, Marco is powerful enough to put this "brachieri" on his first wife's body, whereas he dies the moment when he tries to subject his second wife to the same procedure. But Rovenza died as a consequence of the chastity belt, although it takes years before the belt brings about her death (1036; "molti anni a tal penitenza"). And Rovenza clearly predicted to Marco that another woman would punish him for his evil deeds against his own wife. The public seems enraged when they learn what measures this jealous man had taken to protect his wife from any wooers and to keep her body absolutely for himself. The narrative does not specifically address these protestations, but implicitly we hear them through Marco's own words in defense of his marital practice, defying the public criticism: "Dica chi dir vuole" (1036; say whatever you want). When Marco attempts to attach the chastity belt to the body of his second wife, she invents an intelligent subterfuge, has him postpone the application of the belt for one day, scouts out the entire house for an opportune location to carry out her plan, solicits her lover for assistance, and then powerfully beats her husband back, making him fall into the canal where he drowns. The chastity belt proves to be the cause of his own death. He still holds it in his hand when his corpse is retrieved, and Fiandina's parents clearly recognize the connection between his death and the belt: "per voler mettere lo brachieri alla moglie" (1039; because he wanted to put the belt on his wife's body).

Marco is condemned as a sadistic, jealous, and foolish husband who deserved to die. The city does not start any investigation, and Fiandina and her lover are free to enjoy their life together, as her parents are obviously allowed to take all of Marco's properties as their own. In other words,

Sercambi here projects an image of a torture instrument that even his own audience must have shuddered when thinking of it. The "brachieri" kills women, hence Fiandina's action against her husband proves to be simple self-defense. Significantly, Sercambi mentions such a chastity belt only once in his entire œuvre, and he did not find any imitator in late-medieval and early-modern Italian literature. Jealousy seems to be one thing, but a chastity belt was quite something else which even Renaissance writers did not tolerate. Even for Sercambi, a "brachieri" seems monstrous and an object of a truly devious mind. Basically, this chastity belt was a literary joke in order to ridicule credulous, insecure, and perhaps impotent and jealous husbands, a favorite literary theme, here, however, taken to a new level which subsequent readers could easily mistake for a reflection of historical reality. As Natalie Zemon Davis has observed with respect to a related subject matter, though in sixteenth-century France, "The remission tales show that the 'stuff of invention' was widely distributed throughout society, though formal rhetorical training like that of Etienne Dolet might lead to a different kind of telling from that acquired by a peasant at the veillée. . . . The movement of the pardon tale has also shown us how information, values, and language habits could flow across lines of class and culture. These stories were circulated and debated by people who knew the principals, and were further heard and spread by notaries, clerks. . .and sometimes by the king himself and his council."[201] And: "That authors and readers found piquancy in uncertainty about truth in literary works was perhaps fed by the inescapable uncertainty about truth in documents relied on for order in a monarchical state."[202]

The Useless Chastity Belt in Cornazano's Proverbii in Facetie

Virtually unbeknownst to all those who previously discussed the chastity belt, the Italian satirical novelist Antonio Cornazano (1431–1500, or 1484, as more recent scholars claim[203]) also incorporated this motif, but he used it in such a way that we immediately recognize the absurdity and foolishness of those who dare to force it upon their wives.[204] The motif appears in the fourth novella, here explaining the origin of the proverb "Horns rather than crosses," in Cornazano's *Proverbii in Facetie*, first published posthumously in 1503 under the full title *Antonii Cornazani Placentini novi poetae facetissimi quod de Proverbiorum inscribitur opus nunquam alias impressum, adeo delectabile et jocsum variisque facetiis refertum, ut unicuique etiam penitus mœsto hilaritatem maximam afferat*.[205] This edition witnessed at least twenty editions between 1518 and 1560, and it might have been translated into various

languages as well.[206] The Latin version, which considerably differs from the Italian translation,—if we can call it that—was dedicated to the Milanese statesman Francesco Simonetta with whom Cornazano had close contacts during his ambassadorial duties in Milan from 1479 to 1480. The anonymous translator into English of the *Proverbs in Jests* strongly underscores the poet's genius as a storyteller: "It is the offspring of a masterly writer, full of art and finish, equal in style to that of the best storytellers, surpassing some of them by its originality of invention. The idea of taking ordinary proverbs and assigning them, by means of amusing stories, quite an unexpected origin, is most ingenious indeed."[207] Nevertheless, modern scholarship has virtually overlooked Cornazano entirely, and it is difficult even today to get hold of his texts in their original or in translation.

The fourth proverb says: "Horns rather than crosses," which is then elaborated with the story of a jealous husband who is said to have coined it first, ironically admitting having been cuckolded, although he was rather content with this specific situation instead of being forced into a violent conflict over his wife. The husband's profession of a merchant often takes him on long business trips which awakens many worries in him about his wife's chastity:

> he set his wits to work at how he could manage to prevent her from falling, even though she was willing; so he got one of those girdles of which Semiramis, through the jealousy of her young son, was the inventress, fabricated in the Syrian style. This girdle leaving the woman only the openings [*sic*] requisite for the necessities of nature, he fastened it on her and kept the key thereof, fully resolved to carry it with him to the Levant. (59)

At first she does not object to his plan and accepts the belt without any protests, but then she asks him what she should do when she would have to deliver a child, as she feels that this would be the case soon. Under such circumstances the chastity belt would kill her and the new offspring—a logic that is so forceful that he immediately takes off the belt again and would have let her go scot-free, if he had not overheard some young men talk about their great opportunity to enjoy sex with his wife during her husband's absence (61). The merchant cannot stand the thought of being cuckolded by them, so he comes up with another device with which to protect his wife's chastity. This time he puts a rope around her waist at which is attached a cross, "so that the cross hung right over the suspected spot" (61). No Christian would dare, he believes, to "transgress in spite of the cross" (61), and those who would dare to do so nevertheless would be no one else but a Jew or a traitor ("Giudeo e traditore," 60—the translation here leaves out the second part). The husband places all his trust in the religious dedication of the male members in his community, whereas he is convinced that "his wife would all the same open her legs a hundred times a day to a hundred fellows willing to act" (63).

Unfortunately for him, already on his way far out into the sea, he comes across a group of acquaintances and friends who all assure him: "we would all of us pass through the cross to wait on Madonna" (65), which they probably mean as an ironic-religious message of a generic kind, and not as an open admission that they intend to sleep with his wife. The poor husband immediately returns home and removes the cross from his wife's body because it puts her "more in danger with it than without it" (65, 67). In his stupidity he took the men's proverbial saying literally and unreflectively treated it as an indication that they had cuckolded him behind his back. In his imbecile worldview, he goes so far as to declare: "I prefer horns to crosses" (67).

The chastity belt is thus ridiculed as the most foolish object a jealous husband could think of to protect his wife's chastity. Already here we learn that biological and medical reasons would make the wearing of a chastity belt for any longer period of time impossible. Even the husband recognizes this and does not hesitate to remove it from his wife's body and never even thinks of a practical substitute because there is no equipment that could achieve such a goal. As Cornazano's narrative indicates, however—and in this sense his account has to be seen in parallel with Kyeser's drawing and Sercambi's novella—husbands' jealousy was real and widespread, otherwise these artists and writers would not have utilized this motif so commonly. But it is equally clear that there was no real substance to the idea of the chastity belt because it would never achieve the desired goal and would cause numerous side effects that could have deadly consequences for the woman.

Remarkably, however, the writer projects Syria as the country of origin of chastity belts, casting this object in the aura of the exotic Orient where, according to public imagination until today, all kinds of erotic deviations and perversions originated from, which Edward Said has convincingly described in his seminal study on *Orientalism*.[208]

Cornazano described numerous other adulterous relationships and focused on various sexual issues within marriage, never shying away from being highly explicit in discussing sexual organs and the sexual act with all its problems and difficulties. But he never resorted to the idea of the chastity belt again and appears to have referred to it here only because of the absurdity behind such a kind of sexual straightjacket. Even the poet himself identifies the chastity belt as a most ludicrous and monstrous object that could never have been used in reality because all people need to have free access to and for their orifices.

The Motif of the Chastity Belt in Medieval Welsh Literature: "Sir" Hywel of Bulth

Sixteenth-century Welsh poetry can also boast of an example where the chastity belt plays the central role as the key motif for the erotic imagination.

"Sir" Hywel of Builth [Syr Hywel o Fuallt] composed a parody of the traditional request poem which is predicated on this curious girdle. In "Gofyn Clo Cont" (To Request a Chastity Belt) the singer is in love with the young woman Alice, but he has to contend with a competitor for her heart, Morgan, "a hermit who loves my shy darling."[209] To help in his struggle against the other man, the singer requests from the blacksmith Hywel ap Gruffudd that he create a chastity belt for his girl. The poem does not specify what the actual relationship might be between the singer and the girl, but the various allusions in the text indicate that it seems to be sexual, though marriage is obviously out of the question. Morgan, however, also enjoys a physical relationship with her, as the poet indicates: "dreadful deed, he was a nuisance, / to where the lovely dark jewel was, / the thief would come furtively" (117–19)—unmistakably a highly erotic symbol of her genitalia. The singer devices a plan to prevent Morgan from fulfilling his sexual desires with the girl and describes a chastity belt to the blacksmith in the hope to receive one from him as the absolute guarantee against the girl falling for the opponent. The poem does not relate anything else but the detailed description of the girdle's design. In this sense it would be the most specific literary treatment of this apparatus in medieval and early-modern literature. Of course, the ironic nature of this poem is self-evident and does not require further commentary, whereas the text deserves to be quoted at length:

Trwsia rhag trais dan bais bun
llogell am gafell gefyn,
craff isel lle nis gwelir,
crefft gadarn oh haearn hir;
llen dros ei blew o newydd,
llain fawr dros ei llwyn a fydd.
Trwsia'n union dros floneg
a gwna'n y fan darian deg.
Cais ryw sisiel lle'u gwelych,
cysyllta hyn, ŵ gwyn gwych.
Gwna yn gall, drwy ddeall draw,
lle bo'r bos, llwybr i bisaw,
hir y trig pob cenfigen,
megis tyllau pinnau pen,
mor gyfyng, mawr yw gofwy,
i mewn nad êl yno mwy
na bys bach cyfrinachwr
i chwilio gwen, na chal gŵr. (53–70)

[Fix against violence under a girl's smock
a case about the fettered chamber;

firm and low where it's not to be seen,
strong craft of long iron;
a new curtain over her pubic hair,
there will be a big strip over her bush.
Fix right over the lap
and make on the spot a fine shield.
Seek out some sort of cords
and join them together, fine bright man.
Make skilfully, with understanding yonder,
where the pommel is, a channel to piss,
long does all envy last,
like pin-prick holes,
so narrow, an intruder is big,
that no more will there go in there
either a furtive one's little finger
to probe the lovely girl, or a man's cock.] (119).

Following Dafydd Johnston, Hywel o Fuallt deliberately played with the generic elements of the request poem, especially by replacing the traditional lord with a blacksmith who could help the wooer much more in securing the girl's body for him than any money would do. We cannot tell for sure whether the poet was serious in any sense, and the entire song might well have been "an eloquent expression of male paranoia about female frailty."[210] Albeit surprisingly precise in the description of the belt's mechanism, it seems highly unlikely that Hywel o Fuallt truly had a real chastity belt in mind. But, as in the previous cases, he utilized the idea for the strategic employment of erotic satire, which could have only worked if he knew that some members of his audience would have understood the reference to a chastity belt. In other words, male fantasy was certainly occupied with the idea of the chastity belt at least since the fifteenth century, although we are still far from ever determining a true premodern chastity belt. But the poem does not reveal what the young woman's relationship with the poet truly was, and whether he even had the authority to impose such a gruesome apparatus on her, especially since the singer seems to enjoy the violent nature of the chastity belt:

clo deurwym, caled eres, / egni fydd i brofi brad, / ac allwydd, rhag ofn gwilliad, / i'w droi'n ffest dan gest dyn gŵyl, / yn unnos, a'i gloi'n annwyl, / drem dda uchel, drom, ddichwith, / dros ei chont ar draws o chwith (44–50)

[lock with double clasp, exceptionally hard, / it will be force to put treachery to the test, / with a key, for fear of a bandit, / to turn it fast under the shy girl's belly, / in one night, and lock it lovingly, / good high visage, heavy, dexterous, / awkwardly across over her cunt (119)]

The satirical tone of voice does not fully mask the element of violence, which the chastity belt represented in any case. Although the poet is highly specific in his description of such a girdle, it seems most problematic to take this poem at face value, and therefore as a possible proof for the existence of such belts. Moreover, the seemingly factual nature of the description proves to be nothing but symbolic language to lock the girl in, to cover up her genitalia, to shut out the opponent with the usual means available in military strategies, namely metal equipment, and to keep her as his sexual property only. There is no word about love, or marriage; instead the poet focuses on the brutal struggle between two men over this girl who serves as the price in this sexual competition. Surprisingly, this Welsh poem has never been cited by any of the defenders myth of the chastity belt, as was the case with Sercambi's novella, but perhaps Dingwall and others would not have comprehended at any case the satirical nature of either text.

Most important, the motif of the chastity belt allowed the poet to thematize the woman's genitalia in explicit terms, evoking sexual imagination, without, however, touching upon any details regarding marriage, pregnancy, and the like. Thomas Bein poignantly describes this phenomenon as the result of the irrepressible need to vocalize erotic desires, sexual urges, and the attraction to the other gender: "In einer weitgehend von Männern dominierten Welt hat das Sprechen über Liebe immer auch den Reiz des Frivolen und des Misogynen" (In a world mostly dominated by men the discourse of love always includes the titillating moment of the frivolous and the misogynous).[211]

Francesco II (Novell) Di Carrara, Duke of Padua—The Alleged Inventor of the Chastity Belt. The Origin of a Myth in the Making: Historical Ideological Propaganda as a Smoke Screen

This leads us to the curious myth concerning Duke Francesco di Carrara, the last independent ruler of Padua, often identified as a tyrant, although there is no clear indication why this eponym would have been justified, unless we would call all Italian Renaissance princes "tyrants" because of their often absolute power and ruthless military enterprises of conquest and expansion of their reach of influence. Both Bonneau and Dingwall, and practically every other author who has dealt with the history of the chastity belt, referred to this curious figure as its alleged inventor. Curious, however, is the reason for this malignment might have a lot to do with the simple fact that he was made into a strange pervert by his enemies, the Venetians, who eventually executed him under highly dubious circumstances.[212] Nevertheless, even Bonneau had expressed, as we saw

earlier, considerable doubts concerning the authenticity of the objects Francesco II was said to have invented, and concerns the legends that surround this man in general. Older scholarship, if we can identify it as such, regularly painted a ghastly picture of the tyranny exerted by Duke Francesco. The reality looked quite differently.

Padua was a flourishing city during the fourteenth century, a focal point of much new art and literature, which transformed the medieval city into a shining example of an urban center of the early Renaissance culture. Since 1337 the Carraresi family ruled Padua alone under the leadership of Giacomino, who was assassinated in 1350, then under his son Francesco I "il Vecchio" (d. 1393), who in turn was succeeded by his son Francesco II "il Novello" in 1389.[213] Again and again the Carraresi invited major poets and artists to Padua, such as Petrarch (1349 and 1370),[214] Giovanni Conversini da Ravenna (1380s), Altichiero (1379), Altichiero di Zevio (d. 1395), and Giusto de' Menabuoi (d. 1393). But the Carraresi always heavily depended on Venice and had to fear constant threats from neighboring Verona and Milan. In order to maintain a high level of military troops, Francesco I imposed burdensome taxation, compulsory loans, and arbitrary confiscations, leading to a strong rift between the ruling house and the urban population. In 1388 (November 24) the duke of Milan, Gian Galeazzo Visconti, conquered Padua and imprisoned Francesco I, who died in 1393. Already in 1390 his son, Francesco II, with the help of Bavarian troops, reconquered Padua and, having established good relationships with Venice and other neighboring city republics that had all been opposed to the Milanese operations, resumed his father's expansionist policy. When Galeazzo died in 1402, making room for the competing neighboring city states, Padua foolishly went on a collision course with Venice, which soon began to besiege Padua and eventually conquered the city in 1405. Francesco was taken to Venice and, because of his obstinateness in the negotiations, was eventually executed by strangulation in his prison cell, along with two of his sons. Venice then issued the "Golden Bull" on January 30, 1406, which forcefully incorporated Padua into the mainland empire of Venice, and it remained one of its provinces until 1797.[215]

Francesco II enjoyed a very negative reputation, which might have much to do with his highly aggressive attempts to expand his territory and consequently with his bitter clashes with Venice and its ambitions. Johann Heinrich Zedler, in an entry to his huge encyclopedia published between 1732 and 1754, here in the volume from 1733, emphasizes that Francesco personally poisoned the Duke of Verona, della Scala. Zedler reaches the significant conclusion: "Wie er nun hierdurch, so wol als durch andere unverantwortliche Thaten, sich allenthalben verhaßt gemacht; also fanden die Venetianer ein bequemes Mittel, unter diesem Vorwande ihre Privat-Rache an ihm

auszuueben"[216] (Insofar as he had, through this and many other irresponsible acts, become hated by everyone, the Venetians found a convenient measure to exact, using a pretext, their private revenge against him). Francesco was even said to have brutally mistreated one of Venice's ambassadors, or messenger, whose ears and nose he had ordered to be cut off. Haughtily he challenged Venice to stick to its swamps and lagoons, and to leave the terra firma to him and his compatriots: "Let them go and content themselves with their estuaries and swamps, and leave the empire of the land to those to whom it properly pertains."[217] The war itself and the siege of Padua led to an enormous mortality rate, and eventually Francesco agreed to enter into negotiations with the Venetians. Unfortunately, and this might have been a sign of his character, on the flimsy hope of getting support from Florence, he suddenly broke the armistice, attacked some enemy troops, and so deeply insulted Venice. As Hazlitt comments, "It was Novello [Francesco, A.C.] who had wrought his own ruin. Never imagining that the other Italian Powers would tamely witness his destruction, or that Florence would so cruelly mislead and delude him by promises which she was unable to fulfil, the Lord of Padua had the folly to treat the straightforward advances of Venice with shuffling duplicity and falsehood, by heaping outrageous insults upon her Government, and by mutilating and assassinating her envoys. He played the hypocrite when he could no longer play the bully."[218]

A number of assassination plots against Venice were uncovered, which undermined Francesco's public reputation even further and probably funneled public hatred against him, which came to the head when he and one of his sons were taken to Venice as prisoners on November 23, 1405, with the populace demanding his crucifixion.[219] Although the Novellino was subsequently kept behind bars, numerous plots to free him or to attack the Venetian government were revealed, increasing the public anger directed against the last independent ruler of Padua even further.[220]

There is no doubt that Francesco II was a troublemaker, a brutal, impulsive, and arrogant ruler who never knew when it was time to stop and accept an offer by his opponents in the ever changing territorial wars in Lombardy. He was probably guilty of many attempts or even successful operations to poison his opponents, and brought Padua to ruins. But none of the chronicles or other contemporary sources indicate that he was perverse, employed a private torture chamber, or used chastity belts as a kind of fetish for his alleged sexual depravities. Recent studies of Padua under Francesco II's rule confirm this observation and have basically nothing to say about these historical allegations.[221]

Certainly, the final war between Padua and Venice led to much suffering and destruction, but the chronicles do not report of scandalous conditions at the court of Padua and seem not to know of those accusations of

Francesco II Novello which later generations raised against him. If the last Carraresi lord of Padua indeed had been such a monster, as modern writers liked to characterize him, then this seems to be the product of their fanciful imagination, and nothing else.[222]

The eighteenth-century encyclopedist Zedler unemotionally outlines Francesco's biography and finally only comments that the last ruler of Padua was murdered on January 7, 1406, not in 1405. Similarly curt are subsequent reference works, even those published in Italy, such as the *Enciclopedia Italiana* (1931), where we only find the following comment regarding the Carraresi, that is, Francesco I and Francesco II:

> L'uno e l'altro, circondati di una delle corti trecentesche più brillanti per il culto delle arti, delle lettere, delle armi, ed anche più feconde d'intrighi politici, raccolsero l'ambizioso sogno di far Padova centro di un grande stato continentale; diedero di cozzo contro Scaligeri, Viscontei, Friulani, e finalmente contro il colosso veneziano, che si sbarazzò dell'incomodo vicino strangolando in carcere, dove l'aveva trasportato dopo la vittoria delle armi, Francesco il Giovane. (406)
>
> [the one and the other, surrounded by one of the most brilliant fourteenth-century courts, famous for its cultivation of the arts, literature, and arms, and also riddled with political intrigues, pursued the ambitious dream to make Padua to the center of a great continental state. They were in conflict with the Scaligeri, Visconti, Friuli, and finally with the Venetian colossus which got rid of its unruly neighbor, Francesco II, by strangling him in prison where they had transported him after a military victory.][223]

Strangely, otherwise modern Italian encyclopedias only mention the Carraresi in passing and almost completely disregard the monumental development in Padua during the late fourteenth century, irrespective of the role that Petrarch, among many other intellectuals and artists, played under the patronage of the Carraresi.[224]

If we consider biographical studies of Francesco Novellino, we gain more insight into this ambivalent figure. The *Biographie universelle* by J. Fr. Michaud, first published in 1854 and reprinted in 1966, offers the following information: Francesco began with his rulership on June 29, 1388, but he immediately was defeated by the duke of Milan, Galeazzo, and had to escape. Despite many pleas, none of the north Italian princes were willing to support him, because "les amis sur lesquels il avait compté ne lui montraient que froideur et défiance" (50; the friends upon whom he had counted showed him nothing but coldness and defiance). Francesco was able to rally limited support, even from as far away as Germany (Bavaria), but eventually he could only hold on to Padua, and not even this was safe. But in 1402 the Duke of Milan died, which immediately gave

him some breathing space, and extended his power ambitions to Verona and Brescia, even though only for a very short time. At this point the Venetians began to oppose him with all their might, leading to an eighteen-month-long siege of Padua, when the city finally fell on November 17, 1405. Francesco was taken to prison in Venice, contrary to the agreements both parties had signed (but he seems to have broken them himself on numerous occasions, as we could see earlier).

The Venetian Council of Ten decided on the death penalty for the Duke of Padua and his two sons, also in prison. When he was supposed to be taken to his execution, he fended off the officials, and in the melee he was finally choked to death on January 16, 1406. The entry concludes with the surprising comment: "la maison de Carrara, celle, peut-être, de toutes les maisons souveraines de l'Italie, qui avait produit le plus d'hommes distingués. . ." (the house of Carrara, of all the sovereign houses in Italy, which had produced one of the most distinguished persons. . .).[225]

Not one word about torture, scandals, sexual perversions, or, for that matter, chastity belts! W. Carew Hazlitt, who certainly harbored no sympathy for the Paduan duke, has nothing to say about any of these often colported claims concerning this brilliant, but arrogant, rash, and uncontrolled prince. Contemporary chronicles, such as the *Chronicle of Treviso*, reflected a variety of opinions concerning the political treatment of the Paduan ruler at the hand of the Venetian government and the legality of his ultimate execution.[226] But the sources obviously do not mention anything concerning torture instruments and the like. Hazlitt, however, would not have hesitated to include even tiniest shreds of evidence casting Francesco into the darkest light possible, especially as his own agenda as an historian was obviously to exempt Venice from any accusation of having brutally murdered its opponent.

Certainly, Francesco II, like his father, was a dictatorial, military ruler who ruthlessly extorted taxes and any other support necessary for his political and military escapades, leading to a strong opposition among the urban population. But we have no evidence supporting a commonly cited viewpoint, consistently espoused by all early writers treating the history of the chastity belt, that he was hated because of his tortures and brutal mistreatment of his subjects, his wife, or his concubines, not to speak of alleged sexual perversions.[227] Francesco was certainly not a well-mannered, peace-loving prince who knew how to live in peace with his neighbors; instead he unabashedly took under his control whatever he could gain through military might. But he was also no Marquis de Sade, although his ignominious death by strangulation in the Venetian prison might have fed public imagination with much material to speculate about the actual reasons for this kind of hushed-up execution.[228]

Considering his almost tragic struggle to establish Padua as the center of an extended territory in the vicinity of mighty Venice, it comes as no surprise that the contemporary chronicler Gataro comments: "It must appear as strange as melancholy to the reader of this history, to see the Signor deserted at his sorest need by all the powers of Italy, more especially by Florence, his old ally."[229] He ruled at a most difficult juncture in the history of Padua, and his numerous military efforts to maintain, if not even to extend the limits of his dukedom ultimately failed. As Gataro makes abundantly clear, as soon as he took over the reigns of government from his father, Francesco il Vecchio, there was practically not one day in his life that was worry-free and did not demand all his energy. He emerged as a highly skillful, often quite ruthless, but certainly not unpopular leader of his people, as we can read in the chronicle, for instance: "the citizens hearing of his entrance, had crowded to the great square, shouting, 'Carro! Carro! long live our lord.'"[230]

Despite Gataro's obvious partisanship, it seems highly unlikely that Francesco was a man devoted to sexual perversions, torture, and a victim of hysteric jealousy. If he invented the chastity belt, indeed, it must have been a well-kept secret, especially since it would be entirely contradictory to his personality, lifestyle, and the constant demands upon him as the duke of Padua. In 1391, we hear, for instance, how much Francesco cared for his wife and proved to be a good husband: "Order being now restored, nothing was wanting to complete the happiness of the Signor, save the society of his dear lady. He therefore sent twenty of the first citizens with an escort of a hundred horse to Florence, to bring her to Padua" (131).[231] As to the imagination that Francesco freely indulged in frivolous pastime entertainment of sexual kinds, such as with concubines and torture, the following passage casts serious doubt on it: "The winter months were spent in active preparations for prosecuting the war, on a greater scale, in spring."[232] Of course, the chronicler never delves into private matters, but the war time would have hardly permitted the duke the luxury to entertain a seraglio and thereby alienate his wife and relatives. And as to the charge that Francesco was a tyrannical ruler, we can refer to the following passage: "Francesco caused the bell of the great council to be tolled, that he might communicate these events to the people, and obtain their consent to take the chance of war. . . . He stated that he had offered every thing for peace, but that the Signory [Venice, A.C.] demanded an unconditional surrender, and with so unreasonable a demand he thought it would be foolish to comply, but asked their advice."[233]

Despite all our efforts to verify the age-old myths concerning the last ruler of an independent Padua, the origin myth of the chastity belt does not seem to rest in Padua, and definitely not with Francesco. Rumors about

scandals, however, have always been excellent instruments in the propaganda warfare, and this myth of the chastity belt seems to have been most effective ever since Francesco's apprehension by the Venetians and his subsequent execution. As far as we can tell, the Carraresi did not pursue any other kind of policy as all their neighbors far and wide in Northern Italy, but Francesco became the unfortunate victim in the merciless war of attrition between Venice and the principalities and city states on the terra firma. It might well have been that the Venetians developed the myth of the chastity belt allegedly in the hands of Francesco II in order to cover up their morally highly questionable treatment of their opponent, and subsequent authors, travel writers, and even scholars until today have fallen prey to this most convenient, but not at all verifiable myth.[234] Possibly the heightened level of anxiety and a sense of hurtful pride in Venice, often connected with rampant reports about sexual transgressions of all sorts, might have provided the fertile ground to project an image of the Paduan ruler in the most negative terms possible for propagandist reasons.[235] Together with a high crime rate in Venice and elsewhere, especially of murder, we begin to understand how such a myth of Francesco II as the inventor of the perfidious chastity belt could have been born, and then quickly disseminated, especially because of the curious circumstances of his own death, strangulation in prison.[236] The myth seems to live on in Venice until today, as proven by the object still on display there in the Palazzo Ducale.[237]

No wonder that Bonneau and Dingwall both had to admit, in one way or the other, that not one of their sources had ever truly seen any of the allegedly many chastity belts originally in the possession of the Paduan ruler, the last of the house of Carrara. Contrary to all the hoopla about the sexual perversions allegedly committed by Francesco II, the chronicles do not yield any substantive evidence for it, as already Alcide Bonneau had conceded: "there is not a blessed word about his seraglio, his padlocked women, the strange chest that killed Countess Sacrati or his pocket crossbows."[238]

According to Andrea Gataro, here cited by Bonneau, Francesco "was a stout well-shaped middle-sized man of dark complection, rather haughty in his look, discreet in his conversation, gracious and gentle with his people, merciful to all, very skilled in sciences and fearless for himself."[239] Unfortunately, modern historians of technology and mechanical objects, such as keys and belts, have followed the same arguments as espoused by these early scholars and take the entry in the catalogue of the weapons collection of the Palazzo Ducale in Venice from 1548 as absolute proof: "Braga de Fero della moier del signor de Padoa."[240] We know nothing about the background of this object, and we cannot say when it truly

entered the collection, where it came from, and why the author of this catalogue would have associated the belt with the tyrant of Padua 142 years after he had been murdered in a Venetian prison. Gataro's account of this tragic moment in the history of Padua would not allow any conclusions regarding Francesco's character as an extremely jealous husband: "Bernardo and his men moved towards the wretched prince, and prepared to lay hands upon him. He put himself in a posture of defence, and for some time kept them off. At last they got in upon him and threw him down. Bernardo put a crossbow string round his throat, and drawing it tight, stood over him till he expired" (237). As to his appearance, he was of a "somewhat fierce aspect, but considerate, gracious and kind to his people, merciful to all, wise and brave."[241] Older studies of the history of Padua yield the same result and confirm that the identification of Francesco II as the inventor of the chastity belt was a myth, though a highly successful and long-reaching one.[242]

The Elusive Chastity Belt in Medieval and Early Modern Literature

Intriguingly, the motif of the chastity belt was apparently not appealing to any medieval and early-modern Spanish writer. John Esten Keller offers a comprehensive motif-index of medieval Spanish examples, also focusing on the broad theme of "Chastity and celibacy," but he only knows of tales in which celibacy and repression of lust for religious reasons dominate. As far as I can tell, then, the girdle of chastity does not seem to have played any significant role in medieval and early-modern Spanish mentality.[243] The same observation applies to the history of English and North-American literature,[244] and also to early Irish literature.[245] Extensive research in the *Deutsches Volksliedarchiv* in Freiburg i.Br. (Archive of German Folksongs), that has specialized in collecting widely popular German songs since the late Middle Ages, has yielded absolutely nothing, which at first seems surprising considering the salacious nature of the chastity belt and the obvious openness of folksong poetry for erotic themes.[246] Folksongs have come down to us in the thousands, and allow us to gain a fairly good impression of the popular mentality at a specific time. Insofar as the chastity belt did not make it into this huge corpus, we might also agree that the likelihood of its actual existence is very small, at least beyond the range of erotic, artistic imagination, which in turn might have been the source of inspiration for later craftsmen to produce such girdles out of leather and metal. Of course, erotic literature throughout time has repeatedly incorporated the motif of the belt, or girdle, whether we think of Marie de France's *lai* "Guigemar," the notorious belt that Siegfried takes away from Brunhild in

the Middle High German heroic epic *Nibelungenlied* (ca. 1200), the various belts referred to in late-medieval love poetry (Neidhart, 1220–40), and the most famous lifesaving belt in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (late fourteenth century).[247] But none of them has anything in common with the motif of the "chastity belt."

Certainly, the belt often carried a symbolic meaning, pertaining to virginity or physical power, as we often hear in heroic poetry (e.g., *Laurin A*). In Albrecht's (von Scharfenberg) *Jüngere Titurel* (ca. 1260/1270) the basic elements of a belt are identified with the cardinal virtues of Faith, Love, and Hope, and in Wirnt von Grafenberg's *Wigalois* (ca. 1210) King Joram wears a belt that makes him invincible.[248] In the material culture of the high and late Middle Ages the belt enjoyed a considerable status as one of the most pronounced components of noble appearance, as documented by numerous valuable specimens with precious buckles and decorations, not to mention the expensive materials used in the production of belts.[249] None of these examples, though, bear any similarity with chastity belts in appearance and function.[250]

In the certainly most pornographic collection of late-medieval poems in Latin, composed by Antonio Beccadelli (1394–1471), known under his sobriquet "Antonio Panormita," only one poem even uses the terms "lock and key," but not at all in the sense of a chastity belt applied to a woman. The short four-line poem, "Concerning Corvino, who keeps close watch on his wine, not his wife," ridicules Corvino who pays more attention to his wine cellar than to his wife who seeks sexual gratification outside of the marriage:

> Corvinus vegetem custodit clave seraque,
> Non cohibet cunnum conjugis ille sera.
> Zelotypus vegetis, cunni sed prodigus ille est;
> Haustu nam cunnus non perit, illa perit.[251]
>
> [Corvino keeps his bottles under lock and key.
> His spouse's cunt is granted perfect liberty.
> Wine-stingy but cunt-generous is he:
> wine perishes in the drinking, cunt flows free.][252]

This unabashed poet, first highly praised by humanist friends and fellow poets when his *Hermaphroditus* appeared in 1425, soon experienced harsh criticism and was condemned by the pope, leading to a widespread book burning in Bologna, Ferrara, Milan, and elsewhere. His harshest opponents were Pier Candido Decembrio (1392–1477), secretary to Filippo Maria Visconti, duke of Milan, and the Franciscan friar, theologian, and grammarian, Antonio da Rho (ca. 1395–ca. 1447). But despite all their efforts to denigrate Antonio in public and in private, the latter became court poet to

Filippo Maria Visconti in 1429, basically in recognition of his Latin poems, irrespective of their strongly bawdy nature.[253] If anywhere in late-medieval Latin poetry, we would expect the motif of the chastity belt, at least within a satirical context, to emerge here, but this is not the case. The one poem with its reference to lock and key is far removed from it, and we might say that, *ex negativo*, the *Hermaphroditus* confirms that the myth of this girdle of chastity was not yet part of public consciousness or mentality, and this at a time when the duke of Padua, Francesco II, was supposed to have experimented with such a contraption.[254]

Chastity belts, however, as objects of fetishism, seem to be a popular merchandise on the sex toy market today. Its allegedly medieval origin and also physical appearance derive from a long history of myth-making through encyclopedists, authors of dictionaries and lexica, then through anthropologists, ethnologists, and sexologists, and satirical writers and artists. Apparently, the considerable popularity of the chastity belt among certain circles, well represented on the world wide web and as highly favored toy for sadomasochistic practices, has led to the last attempt to verify and confirm its historical authenticity. Long live the myth!

Figure 7 Deutsches Schloss- und Beschlägemuseum, Velbert, Keuschheitsgürtel 2

Renaissance and Baroque Literature and Arts

The sixteenth-century German satirical author Johann Fischart (1546/1547–90) provides a brief allusion to something that we might identify as a chastity belt. In his famous *Geschichtsklitterung* (1575; Patchwork of History), a very loose German translation of Rabelais's *Gargantua*, 1534), if we may call it that considering the extensive changes, additions, expansions, and simply original aspects, he also discusses the nature of women and openly laments their alleged lustfulness: "Ach was ist über Weibergelüst und list, da helffen keyne beschnittene Kämmerling, nach Pantzerfleck mit Mahl-schlossen, und Diogen besorgt, daß ein Kind, dem lengst sein Wohnvatter gestorben, noch seinen rechten Vatter möchte treffen, wann er unter ein hauffen Volcks solte werffen" (Ah, what can help against women's lustfulness and cunning? Neither eunuchs nor armored patches with padlocks achieve their purpose. Diogenes is worried that a child, whose assumed father (?) has long passed away might still hit his real father when he throws something into a group of people).[255]

The unmistakable satirical tone and the deliberately grotesque manipulation of the German language, at times very hard to understand,[256] immediately confirm that Fischart did not intend to reflect on actual conditions in the life of sixteenth-century women. He only expressed that there would be no material, protective gadgets or gears to keep women from having sexual intercourse because of their irresistible sexual urges—again a time-worn misogynist stereotype that the writer plays out successfully once more. Throughout his entire novel the author intriguingly plays with stereotypes, fantasy, and imagination, and in the present context he combines these aspects with traditional misogyny and the medieval notion that women are nymphomanic and cannot be controlled in their sexual lustfulness.[257]

As the introductory line to this paragraph indicates, Fischart pokes fun at everything and does not want to be treated seriously: "Unnd wa wolten wir alle solche Geuchlieder, darmit sich noch die Buben ihrer Graßmuckeneyer rühmen in Sinn fallen" (37; How should I remember all these scandalous songs with which the rowdy guys brag about their shallow accomplishments?). Although he refers to a kind of metal plate with a padlock, the term itself, "Pantzerfleck," proves to be an ironic allusion to knightly armor now being worn by women, which is a satirical employment of the topos of the world turned topsy-turvy.[258] To construct an argument from this passage that Fischart knew of actual chastity belts and here referred to them in his typical satirical strategy would certainly stretch the range of possibilities in interpreting this term accordingly.

François Rabelais (ca. 1483–1554), though highly innovative and playful in his *Gargantua and Pantagruel* (ca. 1534–54), only refers to the

impossibility of controlling women's sexual desires: "Anyway, if the devil didn't want them to get pregnant, he'd have to turn off the faucet and shut the hole."[259] Obviously, Fischart went one step further in his sarcastic discussion of women's nature and their relationship with the other gender, ironically alluding to the futility of applying a chastity belt. This strongly suggests that Fischart knew of the literary motif but did not care enough about it to develop it any further, probably realizing how little his audience would believe him if he tried to convince them that such mechanical girdles actually existed or were even used. Rabelais, on the other hand, entirely disregarded this motif and only addressed female anatomy.

The Chastity Belt in Eighteenth-Century Art

In later centuries the iconographic motif of the chastity belt did not emerge as often as one might suspect, perhaps because the intensity of the (pseudo-) scholarly discussion of this disreputable object had not yet set in; instead it was mostly carried by encyclopedists influenced by Enlightenment thinking that shuddered at the idea of this object of utter sexual subjugation. In particular eighteenth-century pornographic lithographic art demonstrates how little the myth of this girdle impacted public imagination at that time. Numerous erotic books were published that contained countless illustrations, many of which were as pornographic as can be. Practically no possible position or configuration in the sexual act was ignored, and almost any imaginable perversion found artistic enthusiasts. Nevertheless, the chastity belt figured only in extremely rare cases. One image can be found in *L'Academie des Dames, ou les sept entretiens galants d'Aloïsia*, allegedly discussions by Aloisia Sigea and first translated by the Dutch scholar Joannes Meursius (1613–53) from Spanish into Latin. This work was soon translated into French and accompanied by lithographs produced in 1782 by Antoine Borel (1743–after 1810 [perhaps 1838]) and François-Roland Elluin (1745–ca. 1810).

The Latin version appeared in print either in 1658 or 1659, probably in Lyons under the title *Elegantiae latini sermonis Aloisiae Sigeae Toletanae Satira de Arcanis Amoris et Veneris*. Aloisia was, as far as we can trust the historical accounts, supposed to have been Luisa Sigea (born in ca. 1530), a court lady under Eleonora of Austria, sister of Emperor Charles V. She was highly acclaimed for her ability to speak eight languages and to write Latin verses. Joannes Meursius was professor for ancient languages at the University of Leyden. Both Meursius and Aloisia were famed for their virtuous lifestyle, but this very ideal led the true author of the *L'Academie des Dames*, probably a Nicolas Chorier (1622–92), lawyer for the Parliament of Grenoble and author of a two-volume history of the Dauphiné, to utilize both their names for his satirical account.[260]

In the 1691 edition, today kept in the Bibliothèque Nationale, all illustrations openly show various positions of the sexual act or scenes focusing on the sexual foreplay. One of the earliest illustrations presents a naked woman sitting on a canape, with her legs spread apart, while her lover, still dressed, but with his erect penis already exposed, kneels in front of her and obviously removes a chastity belt. This consists of a loose band to which is attached a lock. There is no key included, but the lover has already succeeded in his task and is about to enter his mistress. Behind the lady we see a tent, which is situated between two large pillars. In the foreground, a black cat squats on a small chair and watches the scene. The hilarious, comical intent is obvious, but the accompanying lithograph emphasizes this even further because we see a group of three ladies and one man in a store where penises can be purchased, some lying on the counter, others hanging from a bar.[261] The German editor of these illustrations, Ludwig von Brunn, emphasizes that none of the illustrations reveal any particular relationship with the text,[262] but we can be certain that the intention was erotic satire, pure and simple. The same applies to the accompanying text, *Le Meursius François, ou Entretiens Galans d'Aloysia* (1782), where we also find numerous illustrations of various options in love making. One of these shows a couple in a bedroom preparing for their lovemaking with him removing the chastity belt from the woman's body. She is as much a willing partner as the lady in the previous illustration, insofar as she is removing her blouse, while he is working on opening the chastity belt from behind. This belt is presented as a slender girdle extending from her pudenda to her hip bones, and seems to be more like a simple piece of bodily ornament than a protective instrument safeguarding her chastity. All the other illustrations also deal with crude sex scenes, so this illustration with the chastity belt proves to be nothing but an early precursor of modern images of sex toys.

Curiously, however, within these three volumes (*Ars Erotica*) of eighteenth-century French erotic (or pornographic) art, among several hundreds only two illustrations thematize the chastity belt. Even within the world of early-modern aristocracy and courtly lifestyle, the myth of this kind of girdle did not incite much interest. The reasons are quite obvious: on the one hand the illustrators did not want to bother with the chastity belt as an object preventing the sexual intercourse, and instead chose much more explicit sexual scenes—after all, these are mostly pornographic lithographs. On the other, the chastity belt did not gain much attraction because chastity itself had no value whatsoever for these artists and their audience. The myth of the chastity belt gained and lost again in interest. Nevertheless, at least two illustrations included the girdle, but both times in such a playful, loose manner that we recognize without any problems the imaginative, artful nature of this iconographic motif.[263]

Modern Art

In Gilles Néret's *Erotica Universalis* (1994), which takes us from antiquity to the late twentieth century, countless examples of erotic art are offered that do not shy away from addressing all possible topics in the area of human sexuality. But the author does not know of any case of a medieval or Renaissance chastity belt. Not even the illustrations created for Marquis de Sade's *The Story of Juliette* (1791) contain any specimens. We have to wait until the late twentieth century when John Willie produced a series of colored illustrations for *The Adventures of Gwendoline* (1946) with specifically pornographic purposes.[264] Though the women in his water colors do not seem to be equipped with padlocks, they are certainly fettered and chained, both around their waists and their ankles. Here the fetishization of violence done to women, and certain kinds of modern "chastity belts" specifically contribute to the creation of visually obscene images.[265]

Of course, we have seen a number of sixteenth-century illustrations as well that were no less obscene and frivolous in their attempt to stimulate sexual fantasy. And the entire scandalous account of Duke Francesco II of Padua, who was alleged to have invented the chastity belt, had been predicated on the very same strategy. But neither these fifteenth-century reports and drawings (Kyeser) nor this twentieth-century pornographic art allow us to conclude that the chastity belt has ever been used in concrete terms by jealous husbands, here disregarding some probable cases of extreme and perverted control-freaks or enthusiasts of sado-masochism. The existence of many chastity belts in museums and collections all over Europe does not imply that these objects were of any evidentiary value. Most museums have pulled them back, anyway, after having realized that they were artifacts *post factum*, and had probably been created in order to reconfirm a general myth that circulated in late-medieval and early-modern Europe. The modern world has naively and erroneously referred back to this girdle of chastity as an ideal icon of perverted concepts of how jealous husbands had tried to control their wives—in vain. In all likelihood we are dealing with the output of early-modern and modern sado-masochistic imaginations, but not with any seriously verifiable historical fact.[266] Consequently, we must identify this myth as what it has always been: a myth. Certainly, myths are not pure fantasy products, instead they draw from some vague notions and ideas, or refer to some specific objects, such as a belt, and transfer its material and symbolic meaning to an eroticized, sexualized meaning, yet still claim to be grounded in historical fact. The correlation between the modern myth of the girdle of chastity—understood purely metaphorically by early-medieval theological writers; employed as a satirical topos by fifteenth- and sixteenth-century poets and artists—and the actual conflicts

between jealous husbands and their wives in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance proves to be erroneous and the result of a deliberate mystification process.

This process has been possible especially since the late nineteenth century because a literary and artistic theme has been thoroughly misinterpreted as having been grounded in and modeled after concrete objects, especially because anthropologists and ethnologists drew fabricated analogies between brutal and horrible procedures of female circumcision and infibulation practiced in certain parts of our world to this icon of male control of female body parts. Suddenly the chastity belt became the key evidence in charging the Middle Ages and the Renaissance for their barbaric treatment of women, although the accusers normally know very little about their sources, and naively repeat the myth like hundreds others before them have done.

Sadly enough, feminist scholarship has deftly contributed to the dissemination of the myth and perpetuated it through a naive and uncritical reflection of this curious object. Françoise Borin, for instances, offers the amazing statement: "For the vagina the chastity belt was the preferred instrument [to control women, A.C.]: although myth attributed its invention to Vulcan, it was actually invented by a man in Padua toward the end of the fourteenth century."[267] She offers no evidence for her claim, though she obviously thinks of Francesco II di Carrara, Duke of Padua (name not even mentioned); she does not discuss the validity of her argument; and she knows nothing of the problematics of her sources, not to speak of the political propaganda, satire, and deliberate manipulation of this reference to the chastity belt by earlier writers. Published in a standard reference work dealing with the history of women, this careless comment must have cemented the myth in many different circles of readers unsuspectingly subscribed to the idea that the scholarly framework would guarantee the veracity of the information presented here. To cite R. Brasch once again: "Perhaps nothing speaks worse of man's lack of trust in his wife—and in the moral strength of a woman—than the existence of the chastity belt."[268] Sadly, when even serious scholarship takes the lead in perpetuating a myth about women's lives in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, there is not much hope of dispelling it through this deconstructionist effort.

Nevertheless, I would not have written this book if I would not have been convinced that by laying bare all the available evidence, by reexamining all relevant scholarly and much popular literature dealing with the chastity belt, and by exposing the faulty methods and wrong conclusions by much modern scholarship, the myth of the chastity belt could be eventually discarded and laid to rest. Fakes matter, as Mark Jones had rightly commented, but not as documents of historical phenomena which they pretend

to demonstrate and to confirm, but as reflections of the specific historical and ideological interests dominating a certain age in which these fakes find such strong welcome.

Of course, some people both in the past and the present seem to have thought of the chastity belt, as we are faced with the evidence of the art work by Kyeser, Vogtherr, Flötner, and others, and some fleeting references in Italian, French, and German literature. But they were all the product of erotic fantasy, or of neurotic obsessiveness concerning how to control, if not to subjugate, women's allegedly excessive sexuality and to block any potential adulterous lover from getting access to the wife's body. They might have been sex toys, or objects of male boastfulness, or simply equipment of erotic art of a very special kind. All this does not make it realistic or likely that the chastity belt was ever used seriously for any lengthy period and for the purpose the propaganda machinery has made us think even today. The same would apply to numerous "medieval" torture instruments that represent the highlights in many different museums but were certainly created in the nineteenth century intended to appeal to the Victorian taste of horror regarding the barbarity of the past ages. Fantasy objects such as the chastity belt should not be equated with common practices, otherwise we become victims of skillful myth-makers since the fifteenth century.

CHAPTER 3

ANOTHER MYTH: THE *JUS PRIMAE NOCTIS, OR THE DROIT DU CUISSAGE* (DROIT DU SEIGNEUR)

We began this study with a critical reading of the myth regarding medieval concepts of the flat shape of the earth. There are, of course, some people who, still today, are convinced that scholars until the time of Columbus's discovery of America in 1492 assumed that the Earth was a flat disk.[1] Subsequently I have dealt with the myth of the chastity belt, and I believe that I could demonstrate how much the idea concerning this allegedly medieval invention to protect a wife's chastity during her husband's absence also pertains to the world of myths, primarily established and colported in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century. To conclude this study, I propose to look at a third, highly fashionable myth, also closely connected with love, marriage, sexuality, and power in the Middle Ages, the lord's privilege to take the virginity of the newly-wed bride, that is, to sleep with her in the first night after the marriage rituals have been completed. As William Chester Jordan defines this myth, "([m]any modern writers of historical fiction imagine a Middle Ages in which lords had a special right that inhered in them as lords, hence the phrase 'droit du seigneur,' which literally means nothing more than the 'the lord's right.' More suggestive and describing the same putative right is the Latin phrase *ius primae noctice*, or 'right of the first night.' "[2]

Although some historical documents suggest that something similar might have happened here or there, overall the notion that a lord was entitled to sleep with the bride of a newly-wed couple borders on the absurd; nevertheless, its mythical status has had a deep impact on modern imagination about the medieval past. There seem to have been some discussions concerning such a law in fifteenth-century Catalonia when farmers in that region protested against their feudal lord's claim in this respect (1462), but already in 1462 the king of Aragon "made it legally unenforceable in 1486."[3]

An anonymous author who wrote the article dealing with the *Jus primae noctis* for the highly influential *Bilder-Lexikon Kulturgeschichte* (1928), for instance, also claimed to have the final say in the discussion concerning the chastity belt, blithely assuming that this law existed in the Middle Ages—this is the same publication forum where the chastity belt figured so prominently. For confirmation the author cites a Swiss document from 1538: "Ouch hand die burger die rechtung, wer der ist, der auf den gütern, die in den Kelnhof gehörend, die erste Nacht bi sinem wibe ligen wil, die er nüwlich zu der ee genommen hat, der sol den obgenannten burger vogt dieselben ersten nacht bi demselben sinen wibe lassen ligen; wil er aber das nüt thun, so soll er de vogt geben 4 und 3 Zürischer pfennig, weders er wil" (The burghers follow the general rule that the person, who holds his lands in fiefdom of the Kelnhof, is obligated to allow the castle seigneur to spend the first night with his wife after he has married her; if he does not want to allow this to happen he must pay to the castle bailiff 4 and one third Zurich marks).[4]

But he emphasizes, moreover, that this form of taxation (!) was also paid to clerical lords, such as convents and abbeys. According to Karl Schmidt (1881), the article states, this *Jus* was therefore nothing but a product of imagination or of misunderstandings. The documentary evidence for the validity of this *Jus* is slim, confusing, and fraught with numerous interpretive problems, making it perfectly rife for the transformation into a myth for the public imagination about the Middle Ages.[5]

Already in the eighteenth century historians argued over this alleged medieval law. H. Ihm summarized the arguments assembled by Christian Ulrich Grupen against the historical veracity of this curious law, published in 1748 in his book *De uxore theodisca* (The Germanic Wife), according to whom all married couples had to pay *pro licentia matrimonii* a kind of fee, but it would be erroneous to equate this with the mythical *jus primi concubitus*. Ihm disagrees with Grupen's argument that the notion of this *jus* simply developed out of an eroticized metaphor for paying the marriage fee and believes that the source material proves to be quite significant. For instance, the lords of Souloire testified in a document from December 15, 1607 that they were renouncing their privilege of this *jus primae noctis*.[6] Irrespective of how Ihm really evaluates Grupen's study, he concludes with the revealing statement: "Persönlich hat doch heute niemand ein Interesse daran, ob das Jus primae noctis bestanden hat oder nicht" (Personally no one today has an interest to know whether the Jus primae noctis existed or not).[7] As Jordan now concludes, "In fact, a nonexistent right has been regarded as characteristic and indeed emblematic of the Middle Ages."[8] If, however, we consider who discussed this *Jus* and when and for what purposes, it becomes very clear that an allegorical expression or a proverbial saying that actually might have been uttered sometime in the Middle Ages quickly transformed into a

mythical statement of enormous longevity because it seems to confirm the sexual depravities that characterized the late Middle Ages.

The criticism against eighteenth-century aristocracy was obviously the ulterior intention of the colportage of the myth of the *Jus primae noctis*, especially because it seemed to reconfirm the broadly negative perspective of late-medieval culture when the nobles brutally mistreated their own wives (chastity belt) and abused their social rank to enjoy sexual pleasures with the young brides of the peasant population: "Critics of feudalism in the Enlightenment had a field day denouncing a political, economic, and social system that allegedly encouraged, tolerated, or at least universally recognized the legitimacy of this right."[9] There might have been cases of a nobleman who raped the bride of one of his subjects right after their marriage, but we would be hard pressed to find any legal documentation that might corroborate the myth of this *Jus* being discussed or openly applied in any medieval community.[10]

In 1881 Karl Schmidt published one of the most comprehensive studies on the *Jus primae noctis* on the basis of hundreds of sources, and upon consultation of scores of scholarly studies in neighboring disciplines. He points out that rumors spread since the sixteenth century that King Evenus III of Scotland, who ruled during the time of the Roman Emperor Augustus, had issued a law that entitled the feudal lords to enjoy the first night of newly-wed virgins. This law was revoked only thousand years later by King Malcolm III, and yet numerous writers of fictional literature naively subscribed to these rumors and utilized them to explain a plethora of reports about certain accounts concerning the relationship between lords and their subjects throughout the Middle Ages.[11]

Schmidt explicitly employs the term "Sage" (1; legendary tale about the use of this *Jus*) to characterize these reports, which quickly turned into the sources for a wide variety of composers (Mozart, *The Wedding of Figaro*), philosophers (Voltaire), and writers (Heineccius, 1736). In the eighteenth century both scholars and journalists entered into a lively, sometimes acrimonious, debate about the authenticity of this *Jus primae noctis*, armed with a host of different arguments and evidence either proving or disproving the historical truth of this curious law of the first night.[12] The debate pursued about the same course as the debate concerning the chastity belt, intriguingly reflecting the development of historical sciences since the early nineteenth century.

Karl Schmidt cites one case early on that had served as the main testimony for most defenders of the belief that such a law had existed. In 1335 or 1361 the ombudsmen of the Archbishop of Lyon, William of Thurey, decided a long-term law case regarding a fee raised from young couples before they were allowed to enter the church for their

weddings. The original ruling by the Archbishop was not lifted, but a lower fee was stipulated (9–10). Proof for the *Jus* cannot be found in this legal debate, but already eighteenth-century authors relied on this law case to construct a general concept about the sexual abuse committed by medieval clerics. Shakespeare drew from two sixteenth-century plays for his tragedy *Henry V* and introduced the *Jus primae noctis*-motif as an expression of tyrannical rule by the leader of the rebels, the alleged John Mortimer. But neither these two anonymous dramatists nor Shakespeare had any evidence that such laws ever existed in the Middle Ages (10–13).

Schmidt bitterly laments about the ignorance of his contemporaries who trusted more popular opinions concerning the *Jus* than critical examinations of the few relevant sources: "man sagt, der Volksglaube an die Existenz jenes seltsamen und gottlosen Feudalrechts würde sich nicht so allgemein verbreitet und nicht so hartnäckig bis in die Gegenwart erhalten haben, wenn er nur auf Unwissenheit oder Verleumdung beruhte; 'man erfindet nicht solche Sachen' " (21; it is said that the popular belief in the existence of this strange and ungodly feudal privilege would not have been so wide-spread and would not have been handed down so obstinately until the present if it had been based only on ignorance or denigration: "one does not invent such things"). Unfortunately, as is typical of all myths, the latter is decidedly the case, as we have already seen with regard to the flat-earth theory and the chastity belt; the more absurd the imagination of a little understood past, the more likely a myth would emerge and influence generations to come.

Myths function so well because they allow those who disseminate them to project a barbaric past and contrast it with the advances of modern civilization. Schmidt cites one source from 1843 that illuminates this attitude most powerfully: "Es giebt nichts Bezeichnenderes für den ganzen Socialzustand jener finsteren und greuelvollen Zeiten, nichts Sprechenderes, wie sehr alle sittlichen und überhaupt menschlichen Begriffe mit Füßen getreten und verhöhnt wurden, als das sogenannte jus primae noctis, jener schamloser Weise zu einer Rechtsinstitution (!) erklärte scheussliche Gewaltmissbrauch, gegen den sich schon beim blossen Gedanken daran alle Gefühle aufs Tiefste empören müssen" (51; There is nothing more telling for the entire social conditions of those dark and barbaric times, nothing more revealing how much all moral and in general all human terms were trampled on and mocked at, than this so-called jus primae noctis, this horrible misuse of power which was shamelessly declared to be a legal institution, whereas the thought alone of this misuse must shake all our feelings profoundly). By contrast, however, Schmidt unequivocally determines that not even one medieval chronicle, literary text, or law book addresses the

Jus primae noctis, and also points out that not even the church ever protested against such outrageous immoral law (53).

Certainly, there were some seventeenth-century statements concerning a new form of abuse of traditional feudal law which some nouveau-riches, who had recently acquired the rank of nobility and the title to aristocratic estates, wanted to reinterpret to give them the right on the first night of a bride, but these claims were soundly rejected (1686, here 54). Nineteenth-century historians tried to construe evidence out of various medieval laws concerning the relationship between a lord and his subjects, who had to ask for his permission to marry, but all these focused on legal, financial, and political issues and had nothing to do with the *Jus primae noctis* (58–64).

Basically, the subjects had to pay a license fee, such as the "merchet" in Scotland (75), but this could never be interpreted as an indication that the lord had any privilege to take the bride's virginity. The famous *Domesday Book*, written under William the Conqueror (1066–87), explicitly stipulated that all unfree newly-weds had to pay a fee to the king (83), but this did not entitle William to any sexual favors. In France this law requiring the payment of such a fee was called "droit de formariage" (91), in the Normandie "droit de cullage," or "culagium" (94). Schmidt concludes: "Aus dem vorstehenden Bericht erhellt die Unmöglichkeit, die in den angeführten Urkunden aus der Zeit vom elften bis zum vierzehnten Jahrhundert bezeichneten Heirathsabgaben auf einen unsittlichen Ursprung zurückzuführen, da sie durch jene Stiftungsurkunden zu Gunsten von Klöstern, Stiftern oder Kirchen begründet wurden" (107; the above quoted report illustrates the impossibility to trace back to an immoral origin the marriage fee as it was mentioned in the cited eleventh- through fourteenth-century documents, insofar as these fees were established in the foundation documents in favor of monasteries, convents, and churches).

The simple reason why we are dealing with a myth here rests in the surprising fact that practically all writers who make any such claims have never been able or willing to cite any trustworthy source, if they have any (227). The difficulty for the historian consists in the enormously demanding task to examine all available sources, whereas the ideologues flippantly refer to some horrible events in the past, condemning one person or another for having tried to employ the *Jus primae noctis* for himself, without providing exact proof or evidence.[13] Moreover, medieval gestures, rituals, symbols, and other forms of public performance normally require a careful interpretation, hence the words used for them in the documents need be contextualized and analyzed before we can draw any conclusions about their true meaning. But modern critics easily jump to conclusions and find public approval because they evoke moral protests against evil conditions in the past. In addition, often the sophisticated legal language in the historical

documents requires meticulous analysis, whereas those who only read them superficially on their quest to find confirmation for the spurious thesis that the *Jus primae noctis* existed regularly become victims of almost deliberate misunderstanding (269–75). The bishops of Amiens, for instance, did not enjoy this dubious privilege. Instead, as royal declarations from 1336 und 1388 indicate, they were entitled to serve as the legal authority in that area, a very normal situation that had nothing to do with the sexual issue so often rumored about (270–71). Legal discussions about license fees, which often provoked intense debate and even conflicts, occurred often and go to the heart of the feudal power structure in the Middle Ages.

Modern authors have tended to read monstrous images into the past, and since marriage today seems to be such a private, personal matter, medieval practices—which are actually not that far away from those in our own time—were quickly misconstrued as indications that the alleged *Jus primae noctis* had actually existed. As Karl Schmidt summarizes his most impressive study, a remarkable and fine piece of nineteenth-century German scholarship, "Aus den zahlreichen sonstigen Urkunden, des Mittelalters und der Neuzeit, über die grundherrliche Heirathserlaubniss und über Heirathsabgaben, die von Hörigen an ihre Grundherren zu entrichten waren, sowie aus den für Heirathsabgaben eingeführten Bezeichnungen, ist kein Grund für die Meinung zu entnehmen, dass in den betreffenden Abgaben ein Ueberrest des jus primae noctis zu finden sei, oder dass daraus ein solches Recht sich entwickelt habe" (375; There is no reason to believe, on the basis of numerous other documents from the Middle Ages and the early modern time that deal with feudal marriage licence and marriage fees that had to be paid by the bondsmen to their lords, or on the basis of the terms introduced for the marriage fees that they reflect a reminiscence of the J*us primae noctis*, or to assume that such a privilege might have developed out of it).

A most remarkable case to the contrary seems to be a judgment by the Spanish King Ferdinand the Catholic from April 21, 1486. Its ninth article bans a practice by some lords in the region of Ampurias and Rossellon in Catalonia to demand from their peasants at the time of wedding either to have the privilege to sleep with the young woman in the first night, or, to step over her once she has lied down at night (377). But again, as the context clearly indicates, the judgment addressed symbolic acts and consequent financial demands by the lords, and not actual sexual transgressions on the part of the Spanish lords (378).

On another plane, there are some curious references to a feudal practice in the Irish Middle Ages. In the epic poem *The Tain*, a tale of national proportions, first composed in oral form in the ninth century, and first written down in the eleventh century,[14] we learn that every man in Ulster

felt so much respect for the high king of Ireland that whenever he married he "let her sleep the first night with Conchobor, as to have him first in the family." And: "Any Ulsterman who gave him a bed for the night gave him his wife as well to sleep with."[15] But the reason is quite different from what we have learned through the common myth because Conchobar functions as the source of life for everyone and could be identified as a god of fertility—a very different notion from the one traditionally projected concerning the practice and abuse by tyrannical aristocrats in the High Middle Ages.

The reason why the myth of the *Jus primae noctis* even developed in the first place comprises three different possibilities: (1). legends about ancient tyrants who did not shy away even from abusing their female subjects sexually were transferred to the Middle Ages; (2). reports of unusual customs among people on other continents as they reached Europe since the sixteenth century; (3). ignorance of the complex legal conditions within the feudal system with its multiple layers of mutual agreements, contracts, conditions, and especially with its difficult symbolic language (Schmidt, 379).

Recent scholarship has refined and deepened the research on the alleged existence of the *Jus primae noctis*, or *droit du cuissage*, uncovering its folkloric, polemic, and ideological origin and its certainly mythical structure, such as Alain Boureau's *Le droit de cuissage* (1995)[16] and Jörg Wettlaufer's *Das Herrenrecht der ersten Nacht* (1999).[17] Boureau, above all, refers to Karl Schmidt's monograph, praising its outstanding scholarship and objectivity, but his German was obviously lacking, otherwise he would have engaged with this highly erudite work right from the start, and would not have waited until page 91, where he even comments on it with a certain condescension ("myopic"). In fact, Schmidt had already dealt a deadly blow to the myth of this ignobly fabled medieval custom, and Boureau could only contribute more specific French and Italian perspectives and data, adding numerous nails to the coffin of this myth, revealing, for instance, where the notion of ecclesiastical *cuissage* originated from: probably the thirty-second nouvelle in the *Cent nouvelles nouvelles*, published in 1486.[18]

Summarizing his findings, Boureau confirms: "During the Middle Ages the two versions of the myth of *cuissage*, ecclesiastical and lay, developed out of an ethical refusal to equate liberty (or grace) with money. Those who promoted this form of commutation were accused of brutal concupiscence, the height of tyranny and alienation, which made them unworthy of distributing that liberty."[19] Moreover, when regarded in light of discursive arguments, the myth turns out to be the result of "tactical insinuation, strategic denunciation, or boastful intimidation, with no sign that these unilateral statements had ever been challenged or prompted the least interaction in law or in fact."[20]

Wettlaufer's comprehensive study pursues the same methodological and interpretive approach, revealing the mythical nature of this popular opinion about the "lord's first night" during the Middle Ages. If we consider all three contributions with their individual methodologies, source selection, and interpretations regarding this phenomenon, we can be certain that the wide-spread belief in this custom was nothing but a myth, a popular notion, but certainly an erroneous concept based on a fundamental misunderstanding of propaganda, public malignment, and denigration of individuals, institutions, and practices. To be sure, we do not need to reiterate their excellent observations and can conclude here with the satisfactory synthesis of our investigation of all three myths, flat earth, chastity belt, and *Jus primae noctis*. Myths are what they are, and they should not be confused with historical facts, as far as we can determine them today. The discourse about such mythical themes, however, has considerable significance for our understanding of common notions about the past and sheds important light on public attitudes toward the Middle Ages today.[21]

But whereas the first and the third myth have already been thoroughly debunked, the myth of the chastity belt had to wait until the present to face a serious challenge. I hope to have accomplished my task to outline the origin and development of the myth formation concerning this infamous girdle and to have disassembled its extremely speculative and mostly faulty elements.

CHAPTER 4

THE NATURE OF MYTHS REVISITED

Myths are extremely hard to deconstruct, but they do not gain the status of historical truth simply because a majority of people are convinced of their authenticity. For instance, modern debates about the Theory of Evolution and its validity in face of the rather common belief in Intelligent Design (Creationism)—at least on the part of many fundamentalist Christians—falsely assume that both approaches are equally valid. In reality, however, despite all claims by politicians and religious leaders, and nowadays even by some scientists, the former is solidly verified and proven and carries the label "Theory" for specific scientific reasons, whereas the latter is a form of belief, philosophy, or myth. There is no way to authenticate the concept of "Intelligent Design," though one can, and maybe even should, believe it, but the more the public embraces this notion, the more they remove themselves from the critical, rational discourse and contribute to the cementation of mythical thinking.[1]

General statements about particular phenomena or objects in the Middle Ages are easy to make, especially when they concern salacious subjects and tease out modern fantasies about that past time. Since it might be rather sobering for the modern audience to discard these myths, critical approaches have a hard time to be listened to. Nevertheless, as our examination of the chastity belt in particular demonstrates, even though many writers colported, expanded, disseminated, and discussed the myth of the chastity belt as a fact of historical truth, and even though a number of museums and collections still claim to own authentic specimens, an objective interpretation of the relevant documents convincingly reveals the mythical nature of this curious object. When artists such as Conrad Kyeser, Hans Vogtherr the Younger, Heinrich Aldegrever, and Peter Flötner included the chastity belt in their drawings or woodcuts, and when writers such as Sercambi utilized the motif of the chastity belt for satirical purposes, then they did not intend to demonstrate that the chastity belt actually existed and was in common use. They

only revealed through their work that they were aware of and enjoyed toying with this element of male erotic fantasy.

By the same token, if a modern artist or writer were to incorporate an entirely imaginative object or theme into his/her image or text, which subsequently would widely appeal to the public taste for fantasy, such as UFOs or crop circles, this would not suddenly translate into evidence that they actually exist. But myths are so profoundly appealing because they escape the critical examination and make blunt statements that are far removed from being rational, logical, and factual. Myths survive all rational analysis because the authorities supporting such myths are always far removed and mostly untraceable. The more various writers and even scholars since the eighteenth century discussed the medieval chastity belt, the more it seemed to gain in its authenticity status.

The myth of the chastity belt, however, can be unraveled, and it is high time we dismiss it entirely as one of those many icons popular opinion likes to associate with the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, especially because of numerous fakes in European museums and collections, fifteenth- and sixteenth-century caricature drawings, and several literary examples from the same period. Satire, on the one hand, and political propaganda on the other, not to forget the rich tradition of ironic treatments of the chastity belt in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century literature and the visual arts, powerfully merged to provide the foundation for a myth that continues to exert its influence on modern fantasy about the Middle Ages, especially disseminated via the world wide web and its endless possibilities for everyone to publish practically anything.

We ought to take this myth seriously because it was a most effective tool in the hands of literary and artistic satirists since the early fifteenth century, an astonishing by-product of the Renaissance, as we may say, growing out of a newly intensified gender conflict and an increased interest in sexuality and eroticism.[2] But we also must stay clear of associating historical propaganda, such as those claims that Francesco II di Carrara was the inventor of the chastity belt as a torture instrument, without dismissing entirely the significant fact that his political opponents on the side of the Venetians employed this myth to undermine and deconstruct his popular appeal among the Paduan population, if not to cover up the officially legitimated murderous attack against him and his sons who were all strangled in prison without any chance of defending themselves in the courts. Both myths and fakes reflect historical phenomena, but it would be ridiculous to perpetuate them today. Nevertheless, the purpose of this study was to trace the history of this myth-making process from the late Middle Ages until today, to examine how older scholarship, if we want to call it that, dealt with this topic, how its findings influenced authors of relevant lexicon and encyclopedia entries, and hence how this erotic myth deeply impacted modern popular opinions.

NOTES

Introduction

1. David R. Reuben, *Everthing You Always Wanted to Know about Sex* (But Were Afraid to Ask*) (1969; New York: David McKay, 1970), 230.
2. Richard A. Schwartz, *Woody, From Antz to Zelig: A Reference Guide to Woody Allen's Creative Work, 1964–1998* (Westport, CT, and London: Greenwood Press, 2000), 96; see also Foster Hirsch, *Love, Sex, Death, and the Meaning Life: Woody Allen's Comedy* (New York, St. Louis, et al: McGraw-Hill, 1981), 65–70.

1 The Chastity Belt

1. There are many new studies on modern medievalism, see, for instance, Elizabeth Emery, *Consuming the Past: The Medieval Revival in Fin-De-Siècle France* (Aldershot, England, Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003); *The Medieval Hero on Screen: Representations from Beowulf to Buffy*, ed. Martha W. Driver and Sid Ray (Jefferson, NC, and London: McFarland, 2004); Justin E. Griffin, *The Grail Procession: The Legend, the Artifacts, and the Possible Sources of the Story* (Jefferson, NC and London: McFarland, 2004). The superficial approach to the past today, however, is not a new phenomenon, and medievalism certainly started already ca. 200 years ago, see Siegfried Grosse and Ursula Rautenberg, *Die Rezeption mittelalterlicher deutscher Literatur: Eine Bibliographie ihrer Übersetzungen und Bearbeitungen seit der Mitte des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1989); Lorretta M. Holloway and Jennifer A. Palmgren, eds., *Beyond Arthurian Romances: The Reach of Victorian Medievalism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).
2. Washington Irving, *The Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus*. The Works of Washington Irving, V (New York: Putnam's Sons, 1860), 109–10.
3. Irving, *The Life*, 110.
4. Gianni Granzotto, *Christopher Columbus*, trans. Stephen Sartarelli (1984; Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 80–82; Rudolf Simek, *Erde und Kosmos im Mittelalter: Das Weltbild vor Kolumbus* (Munich: Beck, 1992), 37–38; E. Edson and E. Savage-Smith, *Medieval Views of the Cosmos* (Oxford: Bodleian Library, 2004), 8.

5. Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Inventing the Flat Earth: Columbus and Modern Historians* (New York, Westport, CT, London: Praeger, 1991), 10.
6. W. G. L. Randles, *De la terre plate au globe terrestre: Une mutation épistémologique rapide (1480–1520)* (Paris: A. Colin, 1980); see also his exciting study on subsequent events in late-medieval sciences: *The Unmaking of the Medieval Christian Cosmos, 1500–1760: From Solid Heavens to Boundless Æther* (Aldershot, NH: Ashgate, 1999); for a list of books studied by Columbus, see Valerie I. J. Flint, *The Imaginative Landscape of Christopher Columbus* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 42–77.
7. For a concise summary of the essential issues, as outlined in Russell's *Inventing the Flat Earth*, see Ian Taylor http://www.christiananswers.net/q-aig/aig-c034.html (last accessed on January 27, 2006).
8. Jill Tattersall, "The Earth: Sphere or Disc?" *The Modern Language Review* 76, 1 (1981): 31–46; here 33.
9. Tattersall seems as confused about the prevalent theory concerning the shape of the earth in the wide spectrum of texts consulted as the medieval authors themselves: "I suspect that authors and redactors had difficulty in accommodating inherited notions and their own beliefs, or in reconciling apparently discordant ideas. . .If relatively little cosmographical information appears in the fiction of the period, no doubt this is partly because it was basic lore taken for granted, but perhaps also because such questions were of little interest to most people" (44–45). The fundamental methodological problem rests in the principal error of searching for information about the medieval understanding of the shape of the earth in purely fictional romances where geography does not matter at all. Knights ride out of King Arthur's court, and they find themselves forlorn in dark and dangerous forests. Even Columbus would have laughed at the suggestion to consult any of those romances for his orientation on the Atlantic ocean. To use an analogy, we would regard it as entirely ridiculous of future historians of science to examine twentieth-century novels as possible reflections about the general understanding of Einstein's relativity theory, when they neither address such a question nor would even have any interest in reflecting upon it accurately, especially when certain utopian or metaphysical aspects are at stake.
10. Mark Jones with Paul Craddock and Nicolas Barker, eds., *Fake? The Art of Deception* (London: British Museum Trustees, 1990), 12.
11. Gerhart von Graevenitz, *Mythos: Zur Geschichte der Denkgewohnheit* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1987), XV–XVI: "daß eine Veränderung in einem Stockwerk der Historie ihre Ursache nur in Vorgängen am Fundament haben könne und daß sie über kurz oder lang ihr Echo in anderen Etagen hörbar machen werde. Nicht die Möglichkeit solcher Zusammenhänge ist zu bestreiten, sondern ihre Schematisierung zum einförmigen Prinzip der Geschichte, zur vielfach modernisierten, in vielerlei Gestalt der 'Widerspiegelung' überdauernden *Teleologie des Organismus*, die besagt, daß der Gesamtorganismus, weil er sich in Richtung auf sein Ziel hin entwickle, dies auch an allen seinen Gliedern tun müsse" (my translation).

12. John William Draper, *History of the Conflict between Religion and Science* (New York: D. Appleton, 1874); it was reprinted in 1875, 1876, 1877, 1880, 1883, 1885, 1890, 1892, 1898, 1899, 1900, 1902, 1903, 1909, 1910, 1916, 1921, 1923, 1926, 1927, 1928, 1970, 1974, 1976, 1999, and many more times, and translated into various languages; Andrew Dickson White, *History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom* (New York: D. Appleton, 1896). The latter was reprinted in 1897, 1898, 1899, 1901, 1907, 1910, 1914–17 (2 vols.), 1919, 1923, 1926, 1930, 1932, 1955, 1960, 1965, 1970, 1978, 1993, 1997, and probably many more times, not counting the various translations.
13. Russell, *Inventing the Flat Earth*, 31–49.
14. The continuing popularity of his masterpiece can be confirmed in the fact that his text is available online at: http://emotionalliteracyeducation.com/classic_books_online/hwswt10.htm (last accessed on January 27, 2006); here cited from chapter III: *The Inhabitants of the Earth*. He also added the following observation: "Thus the great Bishop of Hippo taught the whole world for over a thousand years that, as there was no preaching of the gospel on the opposite side of the earth, there could be no human beings there." In other words, White did not actually argue about the medieval perception of the shape of the earth—sphere or flat disk. His key point only concerned the imagined possibility of people living on the other side of the earth, as we learn a little later: "This decision seems to have been regarded as final, and five centuries later the great encyclopedist of the Middle Ages, Vincent of Beauvais, though he accepts the sphericity of the earth, treats the doctrine of the antipodes as disproved, because contrary to Scripture." This fine point of difference seems to have been lost on the majority of White's readers both then and today.
15. Russell, *Inventing the Flat Earth*, 51.
16. Russell, *Inventing the Flat Earth*, 58–61. Most of the modern misunderstandings of the Middle Ages originate in the faulty concept of earlier times as being less developed, less civilized, hence still somewhat childlike and primitive. This approach was deeply determined by John Huizinga's seminal *The Waning of the Middle Ages: A Study of the Forms of Life, Thought and Art in France and the Netherlands in the XIVth and XVth Centuries* (1924; New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1954), and Norbert Elias's equally influential *The Civilizing Process*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (1939; Oxford and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1993). For a very serious critique, if not debunking of the myth created by Elias, now see Rüdiger Schnell, ed., *Zivilisationsprozesse: Zu Erziehungsschriften in der Vormoderne* (Cologne, Weimar, and Vienna: Böhlau, 2004).
17. I did such a questionnaire with 177 respondents at the University of Arizona, Tucson, in September 2005, and of those 112 agreed that people in the Middle Ages believed in the flat-earth theory, whereas 65 disagreed. If this unscientific poll tells us anything, then it alerts us to the incredible leg-work we still have to do to deconstruct this and many other myths concerning the Middle Ages.

18. Thomas L. Friedman, *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005), 5.
19. Charles Frankel, "Progress, the Idea of," *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Paul Edwards, Vol. 6 (New York and London: The Macmillan Company & The Free Press, 1967), 483–87; Robert Nisbet, *History of the Idea of Progress* (New York: Basic Books, 1980), 317, observes that the idea of progress is absolutely dominant today all over the world, but he also warns us that this idea might not survive because we are in danger of losing five major premises: "belief in the value of the past; conviction of the nobility, even superiority of Western civilization; acceptance of the worth of economic and technological growth; faith in reason and in the kind of scientific and scholarly knowledge that can come from reason alone; and, finally, belief in the intrinsic importance, the ineffaceable *worth* of life on this earth." See also Nisbet's *The Making of Modern Society* (Brighton, Sussex: Wheatsheaf, 1986). See also Reinhold Niebuhr, *Man's Nature and his Communities: Essays on the Dynamics and Enigmas of Man's Personal and Social Existence* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1965).
20. The historical development of this negative notion is beautifully traced by Lucie Varga, *Das Schlagwort vom "finsteren Mittelalter."* Veröffentlichungen des Seminars für Wirtschafts- und Kulturgeschichte an der Universität Wien, 8 (Baden, Vienna, Leipzig, and Brünn: Rudolf M. Rohrer, 1932), 36–56; see also http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dark_Ages (last accessed on January 27, 2006).
21. Ernst Cassirer, *Language and Myth*, trans. Susanne K. Langer (1925; New York and London: Harper & Brothers, 1946), 7.
22. Cassirer, *Language and Myth*, 14.
23. Cassirer, *Language and Myth*, 32.
24. Cassirer, *Language and Myth*, 97.
25. For a broad, often quite humorously written introduction to mythology, see Christopher W. Blackwell and Amy Hackney Blackwell, *Mythology for Dummies* (Indianapolis: Wiley Publishing, 2002); for a traditional approach to mythology, see Jan de Vries, *Forschungsgeschichte der Mythologie*. Orbis Academicus (Freiburg and Munich: Karl Alber, 1961); Carl-Friedrich Geyer, *Mythos: Formen—Beispiele—Deutungen*. C. H. Beck Wissen, 2032 (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1996), 76.
26. Gerhart von Graevenitz, *Mythos*, 1987, XVI–XXIII, identifies this phenomenon as "Geschichte als Rede" (History as Speech), XIX.
27. Nicole Dentzien, *The Openness of Myth: The Arthurian Tradition in the Middle Ages and Today*. Kieler Beiträge zur Anglistik und Amerikanistik. Neue Folge, 18 (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2004), 15.
28. Dentzien, *The Openness of Myth*, 24.
29. Dentzien, *The Openness of Myth*, 27.
30. Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 167.
31. Geyer, *Mythos*, 76; my translation.

32. Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung: Philosophische Fragmente* (1947; Frankfurt a.m: Suhrkamp, 1968, 18–37; see also Kurt Hübner, *Die Wahrheit des Mythos* (Munich: Beck, 1985).
33. Paul Freedman and Gabrielle M. Spiegel, "Medievalisms Old and New: The Rediscovery of Alterity in North American Medieval Studies," *American Historical Review* 103 (1998): 677–704; here 698; see also Juanita Feros Ruys, "Playing Alterity: Heloise, Rhetoric, and Memoria," *Maistresse of My Wit: Medieval Women, Modern Scholars*, ed. Louise D'Arcens and Juanita Feros Ruys. Making the Middle Ages, 7 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004), 211–43; here 212–16.
34. Kathleen Biddick, "Bede's Blush: Postcards from Balik, Bombay, Palo Alto," *The Shock of Medievalism*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1998), 83–101; here 83.
35. Though cogently argued and well researched, Don LePan's *The Cognitive Revolution in Western Culture*, Vol. 1: *The Birth of Expectation* (Houndmill, Basingstoke, Hampshire, UK: Macmillan, 1989), naively embraces the same concept, basically identifying the Middle Ages with humanity's developmental stage of childhood because he uses the very narrow measuring stick of "rationality" to compare the past with the present. There were highly rational scientists in the Middle Ages and highly dogmatic theologians, and there are highly irrational people in the modern times, even scientists among them, who fight tooth and nail against, for instance, the Evolution Theory, and this in the twenty-first century!
36. Cary J. Nederman, *Worlds of Difference: European Discourses of Toleration, c. 1100–c. 1550* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000); Albrecht Classen, "Toleranz im späten 13. Jahrhundert, mit besonderer Berücksichtigung von Jans von Wien und Ramon Llull," *Mediaevistik* 17 (2004): 25–55.
37. Mark Jones, *Fake?*, 13. In the foreword to Mark Jones, ed., *Why Fakes Matter: Essays on Problems of Authenticity* (London: British Museum Press, 1992), Jones emphasizes, "not that the study of fakes should be abandoned but that it should be conducted with a greater awareness of the contingent and culturally conditioned nature of the distinctions made and the criteria applied" (9). For a critical examination of fakes at large and the difficulties in any authentication process, now see Peter Knight and Jonathan Long, eds., *Fakes and Forgeries* (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2005). See also Robin Myers and Michael Harris, eds., *Fakes and Frauds: Varieties of Deception in Print &* Manuscript (Detroit: St. Paul's Bibliographies, 1989); Ronald D. Spencer, ed., *The Expert Versus the Object: Judging Fakes and False Attributions in the Visual Arts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).
38. Sergiy Taran, "Mythical Thinking, Aristotelian Logic, and Metaphors in the Parliament of Ukraine," *Beyond Public Speech and Symbols: Explorations in the Rhetoric of Politicians and the Media*, ed. Christ'l De Landtsheer and Ofer Feldman (Westport, CT, and London: Praeger,

2000), 120–43; here 121. He also determines: "In mythical thinking, the most frequent and significant assumptions are Dramatization, Synthetism, and Images." By contrast, "[t]he most frequent and significant assumptions of Aristotelian logic are Neutrality, Concepts, and Non-Contradiction." (135).

39. Michel Tournier, *Le vent Paraclet* (Paris: Gallimard, Folio, 1977), 191; the second statement is quoted from Christopher Lloyd, "Myths and Ironies of the Occupation: Marcel Aymeé's 'Traversée de Paris,' " *Myths and its Legacy in European Literature*, ed. Neil Thomas and Françoise Le Saux (Durham: Durham Modern Languages Series, 1996), 49–61; here 49.
40. Eleazar M. Meletinsky, *The Poetics of Myth*, trans. Guy Lanoue and Alexandre Sadetsky. Theorists of Myth (New York and London: Garland, 1998), 59.
41. Meletinsky, *The Poetics of Myth*, 68. For further discussion of myths, see, for example, John B. Vickery, ed., *Myth and Literature: Contemporary Theory and Practice* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966); Ted R. Spivey, *Beyond Modernism: Toward a New Myth Criticism* (Lantham, New York, and London: University Press of America, 1988); Manfred Frank, *Kaltes Herz: Unendliche Fahrt. Neue Mythologien. Motiv-Untersuchungen zur Pathogenese der Moderne*, Neue Folge, 456 (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1989); Stathis Gourgouris, *Does Literature Think?: Literature as Theory for an Antimythical Era* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003).
42. See also Eugene Garver, *For the Sake of Argument: Practical Reasoning, Character, and the Ethics of Belief* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), ch. 4: "The Ethical Criticism of Reasoning."
43. Lloyd, "Myths and Ironies of the Occupation," 50.
44. Angela Carter, *The Sadeian Woman: An Exercise in Cultural History* (1979; London: Virago, 1982), 69.
45. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, selected and translated from French by Annette Lavers (1972; London: Paladin, 1973), 143.
46. Barthes, *Mythologies*, 129.
47. Barthes, *Mythologies*, 131.
48. See the wonderful series of anthologies of scholarly articles dealing with medieval myths, Ulrich Müller and Werner Wunderlich, eds., *Mittelalter-Mythen* (St. Gallen: UVK. Fachverlag für Wissenschaft und Studium, 1996). But the chastity belt is not yet included, and there are no plans, as far as I can tell, to do so in any of the future volumes.
49. Harold L. Peterson, *How Do You Know It's Old? A Practical Handbook on the Detection of Fakes for the Antique Collector and Curator* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1975), 56–116. Unfortunately, Peterson does not include chastity belts in his discussion, though he examines even belt buckles, buttons, hat plates, and horse brasses.
50. William Chester Jordan, "Chastity Belt," *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, Supplement 1 (New York, Detroit, et al: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2004), 107–08; here 107.
51. See the contributions to *Menacing Virgins: Representing Virginity in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, ed. Kathleen Coyne Kelly and Marina Leslie

(Newark: University of Delaware Press; London: Associated University Press, 1999), 120–31, 135–36, 140–42, 157–64, 160–61, et passim; Kathleen Coyne Kelly, *Performing Virginity and Testing Chastity in the Middle Ages*. Routledge Research in Medieval Studies (London and New York: Routledge, 2000).

52. For instance, neither James A. Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Europe* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), nor Wolfgang Beutin, *Sexualität und Obszönität: Eine literaturpsychologische Studie über epische Dichtungen des Mittelalters und der Renaissance* (Würzburg: Königshausen and Neumann, 1990), have anything to say about the chastity belt.
53. *PL* 184: *S. Bernardi Abbatis Primi Clarae-Vallensis Opera Omnia*, ch. 149: LXIII: De fine et scopo sui status semper considerando. Here I have used the CD-ROM version: http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?url_ver=Z39.88-2004& res_dat=xri:pld-us&rft_dat= xri:pld:ft:all:Z500104814.
54. I would like to express my gratitude to Peter Dinzelbacher, Werfen, Austria, for his assistance in the translation of this and the subsequent Latin quotes.
55. Damascius, *The Philosophical History*, text with translation and notes by Polymnia Athanassiadi (Athens: Apamea Cultural Association; Oxford: Oxbow Books; Oakville, CT: David Brown Book Company, 1999), 137 and 139. For further information on Damascius, see: Johannes von Damaskos, *Philosophische Kapitel*. Eingeleitet, übersetzt und mit Erläuterungen versehen von Gerhard Richter. Bibliothek der griechischen Literatur, 15 (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1982), 2–24.
56. Gertrud Schiller, *Ikonographie der christlichen Kunst*, Vol. 4, 2 (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1980), 119–20; see also http://www.beyars.com/kunstlexikon/lexikon_3738.html (last accessed on January 27, 2006).
57. H. F. Döbler, *7000 Jahre Handwerk und Technik* (Herrsching: Manfred Pawlak, Verlagsgesellschaft, n.y. [ca. 1980], 176. The basic information was taken from the *Dictionnaire archéologique des techniques*, 2 vols. (Paris: Editions de l'Accueil, 1963–64).
58. The prologue states: "eine brauchbare Gelegenheitslektüre für gebildete Leser" (4; useful reading material for educated readers).
59. F. M. Feldhaus, *Die Technik: Ein Lexikon der Vorzeit, der geschichtlichen Zeit und der Naturvölker* (1914; Wiesbaden: R. Löwit, 1970; orig. Munich: Heinz Moos, 1970).
60. It remains to be seen whether this woodcut was actually created by Baldung; I could not verify it as part of his collected works, see Matthias Mende, *Hans Baldung Grien: Das graphische Werk. Vollständiger Bildkatalog der Einzelholzschnitte, Buchillustrationen und Kupferstiche* (Unterschneidheim: Verlag Dr. Alfons Uhl, 1978); Gert von der Osten, *Hans Baldung Grien: Gemälde und Dokumente* (Berlin: Deutscher Verlag für Kunstwissenschaft, 1983); *Hans Baldung Grien in Freiburg*. Catalogue of the Exhibition in the Augustinermuseum, Freiburg, ed. Saskia Durian-Ress (Freiburg i.Br.: Rombach, 2001). Christa Grössinger, *Humour and Folly in Secular and Profane Prints of Northern Europe: 1430–1540* (London and Turnhout: Harvey Miller Publishers, 2002), 122, now attributes

this woodcut to Hans Vogtherr the Younger (ca. 1540), but she does not adduce any background information of this woodcut. In the list of figures she only gives credit to the Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin, vii. Recent research seems to agree that Vogtherr indeed was the artist, whose work I will discuss later. I will then also supply the missing verses, which are left out in this short lexicon entry, and offer a different interpretation of the pictorial motif, in line with Grössinger's suggestions.

61. Feldhaus, *Die Technik*, 40. I will refer to some of these studies in greater detail later, since they all represent important stages in the formation of the myth concerning the chastity belt.
62. Barbara G. Walker, *The Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983), 162–63.
63. R. Brasch, *How Did Sex Begin?: The Sense and Nonsense of the Customs and Traditions that have Separated Men and Women since Adam and Eve* (New York: David McKay Company, 1973), 22.
64. Allen Edwardes and R. E. L. Masters, *The Cradle of Erotica: A Study of Afro-Asian Sexual Expression and an Analysis of Erotic Freedom in Social Relationships* (New York: The Julian Press, 1963), 59. As we will see later, highly spurious ethnographic and anthropological research tends to wallow in the horrid when describing customs and practices by peoples outside of the European scope. Hence the sudden inclusion of the chastity belt and, even worse, infibulation in the Roman and the medieval world.
65. Robert T. Francoeur, ed., *The Complete Dictionary of Sexology*. New expanded ed. (1991; New York: Continuum, 1995), 95.
66. Kenneth Maxwell, *A Sexual Odyssey: From Forbidden Fruit to Cybersex* (New York and London: Plenum Press, 1996), 54.
67. Adam Kuper, *The Invention of Primitive Society: Transformations of an Illusion* (London and New York: Routledge, 1988); see also Charles Roberts Aldrich, *The Primitive Mind and Modern Civilization* (London: K. Paul, Trench, and Trubner, and New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Co., 1931); Franz Boas, *The Mind of Primitive Man*, rev. ed. (1911; New York: Macmillan, 1938), ch. 2; for a critical review of these myth-makers, see Barbara Rosenwein, "Worrying about Emotions in History," *The American Historical Review* 107, 3 (2002): 821–45; here 828–30.
68. Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, 1993; critically opposed to his simplistic black-and-white perspectives, Gerd Schwerhoff, "Zivilisationsprozeß und Geschichtswissenschaft: Norbert Elias' Geschichtsparadigma in historischer Sicht," *Historische Zeitschrift* 266 (1998): 561–606. See also the severe criticism against Elias with respect to his concept of the history of education, hence social disciplining, by Rüdiger Schnell, ed. *Zivilisationsprozesse: Zu Erziehungsschriften in der Vormoderne* (Cologne, Weimar, and Vienna: Böhlau, 2004).
69. A marvellous example for the astounding blending of fact and fiction would be the Italian website http://www.iltettodicatwoman.com/erotismo/curiosita.01.htm (last accessed on January 27, 2006). Half of the historical information is correct, but half is utterly wrong, typical for most publications, either printed on paper or electronic, dealing with the chastity belt.

70. See, for example, http://home.teleport.com/~gumball/chastity.html (last accessed on January 27, 2006).
71. Alcide Bonneau, *Les cadenas et ceintures de chasteté: Notice historique, suivie du Plaidoyer de Freydier* (Paris: Liseux, 1883); translated and reprinted in English as: *Padlocks and Girdles of Chastity: An Historical and Descriptive Notice; to which is Added Freydier's Speech against their Use in France (ReLajon versus Berlhe, Breach of Promise of Marriage)*, trans. from the French by Marie Lajon (Paris: Isidore Liseux, 1892); this was reprinted in 1900, 1925 (?), 1928, 1931, 1932, and even as late as 1964 (New York: Valhalla Books). The latter was intended only for subscribers, but still 645 numbered copies were printed.
72. Esar Levine, *Chastity Belts: An Illustrated History of the Bridling of Women, Containing Numerous Explanatory Excerpts from Curious Facetious and Erotic Books* (New York: The Panurge Press, 1931). 2000 copies of this book were printed.
73. This might have been *Notice des dessins, cartons, pastels, miniature et émaux exposés dans les salles du 1er étage au Musée impérial du Louvre* (Paris: C. de Mourgues frères, 1866). Bonneau identifies Laborde's article, "Ceinture de chasteté," as a contribution to the second volume.
74. Cited from Bonneau, *Les cadenas et ceintures de chasteté*, 13–14.
75. Rufus C. Camphausen, *The Encyclopedia of Erotic Wisdom: A Reference Guide to the Symbolism, Techniques, Rituals, Sacred Texts, Psychology, Anatomy, and History of Sexuality* (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions International, 1991), 82. Camphausen refers to Marilyn French, *Beyond Power: On Women, Men and Morals* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1985), and it is well possible that she in turn relied on Bonneau, *Les cadenas et ceintures de chasteté*, as the wording proves to be very similar.
76. Bonneau, *Les cadenas et ceintures de chasteté*, 27, cites Brosses from his *Lettres familières*, XVIe, but does not give any further details.
77. This is also discussed by Alexander Schulz, *Das Band der Venus: Die Geschichte des Keuschheitsgürtels* (Isny/Allgäu: Andreas Schulz Verlag, 1984), 26–27, who argues, amazingly, in the same positivistic fashion as Bonneau as if historiographical research had not developed its methodologies, approaches, and theoretical underpinnings. This demonstrates, however, the enormous scope of mythical thinking, once a certain concept shrouded in erotic mystery has been created.
78. *Vie des Dames galantes*, Discourse I; in Bonneau, *Les cadenas et ceintures de chasteté*, 46. The full name of the Abbé is: Pierre de Bourdeille Brantôme, who died in 1614. For a modern edition, see the volume illustrated by Pierre Leconte, ed. Jean Adhémar, *Classiques*, 50 (Paris: Le club français du livre, 1956); see now Andrea Grewe, "Brantômes *Vies des dames illustres*. Frauen-Geschichtsschreibung in der Renaissance," *Regionaler Kulturraum und intellektuelle Kommunikation vom Humanismus bis ins Zeitalter des Internet: Festschrift für Klaus Garber*, ed. Axel E. Walter, *Chloe*, 36 (Amsterdam and New York: Editions Rodopi, 2005), 191–209.
79. Dr. Caufeynon, *La ceinture de chasteté: Son histoire, son emploi, autrefois et aujourd'huis* (Paris: P. de Poorter, 1905), 5.

80. Caufeynon's only source was Paw, *Recherches philosophiques sur les Américaines*, Vol. II (no further data are provided).
81. In particular, he refers to Andrea Gattaro, *Historial Padovence*, which I could not identify through any of the major bibliographies, both printed (NUC) and online (WorldCat). But I found another publication offering extensive excerpts from a Gataro in English translation, to which I will refer later.
82. Docteur Caufeynon, *La ceinture de chasteté: son histoire, son emploi, autrefois et aujourd'hui*. Rediviva (Nîmes: Lacour, 2000).
83. WorldCat lists a total of 73 independent book publications by him.
84. Eric John Dingwall, *The Girdle of Chastity: A Fascinating History of Chastity Belts* (1931; New York: The Clarion Press, 1959); I will quote from this edition only. But Dingwall's study was even reprinted as late as 1992 (New York: Dorset Press).
85. Modern movie makers have, on numerous occasions, embraced the notion of the chastity belt as an attractive theme for their works, such as Nanubhai B. Desai's Indian film *Badhra Bhamini* (1925) [*Test of Chastity*]; Pasquale Festa Campanile's *Cintura di castità* (1968); and Bob Kellet's *Up the Chastity Belt* (1971), not to mention scores of pornographic flicks. See also Woody Allen's famous *Everything You Always Wanted to Know about Sex* (1972), discussed earlier.
86. John Hawkes, *Humors of Blood & Skin: A John Hawkes Reader. Autobiographical Notes* (New York: New Directions, 1984), includes a chapter entitled "Chastity Belt." Laura Fredericks, *The Chastity Belt* (New York: R. Speller, 1961), modelled her entire novel on this theme. Robert Ross arranged the song "Chastity Belt" for the LP recording of *Live at the Holly Lodge* for the *Merseysippi Jazz Band* (Swallow Recordings: 1979–1980?); the folk music group Brogue produced the tape "Alive Alive-o" in 1990, which contains the song "Chastity Belt" (Chicago: Tony Lyons, 1990). In 1967 appeared a volume with the drawings by Ugo de Vargas y Machuca and the comic verses by Joseph Bepi Nider Histrico with the title *La cintura di castità* (Roma: Ex typographia Julia, 1967). Long before them the Italian author Pitigrilli had published a collection of comic tales, entitled *La cintura di castità*, 11th ed. (Milano: Sonzogno, 1925), which was translated into numerous languages. Many other examples could be found which would confirm the enormous popularity of the myth of the chastity belt. Everyone seems to know about it, but nobody cares to trace its origin.
87. Cited from Eduard Fuchs, *Illustrierte Sittengeschichte vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart*, 6 vols. (Munich: 1900–12), II, 150–51.
88. Lutz Röhrich, *Lexikon der sprichwörtlichen Redensarten*, Vol. 2 (Freiburg, Basel, and Vienna: Herder, 1973), 859.
89. Karl Friedrich Wilhelm Wander, *Deutsches Sprichwörter-Lexikon: Ein Hausschatz für das deutsche Volk*, 5 vols. (1873; Aalen: Scientia, 1963), 3:1682–83 (for "Riegel"); 4:243–46.
90. Wander, *Deutsches Sprichwörter-Lexikon*, 2:1262–63.
91. F. M. Feldhaus, *Die Technik der Vorzeit, der geschichtlichen Zeit und der Naturvölker* (1914; Wiesbaden: R. Löwit, 1970), 564–67.

92. *Museographia oder Anleitung zum rechten Begriff und nützlicher Anlegung der Museorum, oder Raritäten-Kammern: darinnen gehandelt wird von denen Museis, Schatz-, Kunst- und Raritäten-Kammern insgemein, welche heutiges Tages grösten theils annoch in vielen europäischen Orten gefunden werden. . .*; nebst einem Register / in beliebter Kürtze zusammen getragen und curiösen Gemüthern dargestellet von C. F. Neickelio. Mit einigen Zusätzen und dreyfachem Anh. vermehret von Johann Kanold (Leipzig: Hubert, 1727); two copies of this book can be found in the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, under the call number Kun B 791, Bib A 30 and Lg 3570. I found them only through an online search and did not examine them personally.
93. 65; I was fortunate enough to find a copy in the Library of the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. The volume is still not fully catalogued there and has no call number.
94. Perhaps Dingwall referred to Ole Worm, *Danicorum Monumentorum Libri Sex. E spissis antiquitatum tenebris et in Dania ac Norvegia extantibus ruderibus eruti* (Hafniae: Ioachimus Moltkenius Bibliopola, 1643); a copy of which can be found in the Library of the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, 439.617.W89d. Alexander Schulz, *Das Band der Venus*, 60–61, offers a more detailed summary of the scandalous affair involving a pathologically jealous husband on Falster, one of the Danish islands. Worm (1588–1654) was a famous historian, scientist, and medical doctor who described his own collection of exotic objects in his *Museum Worminarum seu Historia Rerum Rariorum*, printed in 1655 in Leiden.
95. His other works include a translation of Edouard de Beaumont's *The Sword and Womankind: Being an Informative History of Indiscreet Revelations* into English in 1929, and a translation of Claude-Prosper Jolyot de Cerbillon's *Sextravanganza* in 1932.
96. Levine, *Chastity Belts*, 9.
97. The copy that I could use came from the John M. Olin Library at Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri. As the lending slip indicates, this book had been borrowed many times, probably because of its sexual content.
98. My own investigation led me to the same conclusion regarding late-medieval and early-modern German erotic literature, see, for example, Martin Montanus, *Schwankbücher (1557–1566)*, ed. Johannes Bolte. Volkskundliche Quellen. Neudrucke europäischer Texte und Untersuchungen. III: Märchen und Schwank (1899; Hildesheim and New York: Georg Olms, 1972). Although Montanus includes many openly erotic, if not obscene, narrative themes and motifs, borrowed from Boccaccio, Poggio Bracciolini, and many other sources, he seems not to know of, or might not have been interested in, the chastity belt, like most contemporary Renaissance authors. To be sure, he openly deals with all kinds of adultery, castration, marital brutality, exhibitionism, and other forms of sexual practices and deviations, but still, not one of his many erotic tales reflects any knowledge of the chastity belt. See Beutin, *Sexualität und Obszönität*, 112, 116, 132, 157, 227 283, 290–93, et passim.

99. Johann Heinrich Zedler, *Grosses vollstændiges Universal Lexicon Aller Wissenschaften und Kuenste*, Vol. 6 (Halle and Leipzig: Zedler, 1733; rpt. Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1961), 70.
100. The subtitle reads: *Aus dem Franzoesischen uebersetzt, und mit Anmerkungen und Zusætzen vermehrt, auch noethigen Kupfern versehen*. Here I have used the microfiche copy in the Staatsbibliothek Berlin, HA2 Cd 2735.
101. Krünitz' *Oekonomische Enzyclopaedie*, Vol. 37, 1786, "Keuschheit," 169–210.
102. Schulz, *Das Band der Venus*, 21, also cites this passage, but he uses it as confirmation for his observation that the chastity belt was used often in Italy during the early Renaissance. Without any understanding of how Krünitz reached his conclusion, Schulz accepts the authority of the encyclopedist as absolute and credits him with having a better historical understanding than modern scholars. *Quod est demonstrandum*.
103. The subtitle reads: *deutliche Beschreibung des Reiches der Natur, der Himmel und himmlischen Koerper, der Luft, der Erde, nebest den bekannten Gewaechsen, der Thiere, Steine und Erzte, des Meeres und der darinnen lebenden Gesch oe pfe; imgleichen aller menschlichen Handlungen, Staats=Recht =Krieges=Policey= Haushaltungs= und gelehrten Gesch ae ffte, Handthierungen und Gewerbe, sammt einer Erklaerung der dabey vorkommenden Kunstw oe rter und Redensarten*, von neuem durchgesehen, verbessert und stark vermehrte von Johann Joachim Schwaben (Königsberg and Leipzig: Zeisens Witwe und Hartungs Erben, 1767), 700b. Here I use a copy in the Staatsbibliothek Berlin, HA 2 Cd 2213.
104. Ferdinand Wachter, "Galanterie," *Allgemeine Encycklopaedie der Wissenschaften und Kuenste,* ed. J. S. Ersch and J. G. Gruber, first section, part 25 (1851; Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1972), 257–86; here 284.
105. W. Müller, "Cicisbeato und Cicisbeatura"; Ersch and Gruber, *Allgemeine Encyclopaedie*, 17, 244–45.
106. Alwin Schultz, *Das höfische Leben zur Zeit der Minnesinger*, 2 vols. (1889; Osnabrück: Otto Zeller, 1965).
107. Alwin Schultz, *Das höfische Leben zur Zeit der Minnesinger*, 1:580: ". . .aber eben dass sie ihre Aufmerksamkeit in dem Grade erregen, sie des Aufzeichnens für würdig erachtet werden, beweist, wie nicht so gar häufig sich solche Skandalgeschichten ereigneten; wären dieselben eine alltägliche Erscheinung gewesen, man hätte ihnen keine so grosse Beachtung geschenkt" (particularly because they stir such attention that their reports are recorded which indicates that these scandalous affairs did not happen so often. If these had been a matter of daily occurrence, they would not have received so much attention).
108. In a later study, *Das häusliche Leben der europäischen Kulturvölker vom Mittelalter bis zur zweiten Hälfte des XVIII. Jahrhunderts*. Handbuch der mittelalterlichen und neueren Geschichte, IV: Hilfswissenschaften und Altertümer (Munich and Berlin: R. Oldenbourg, 1903), he does not even

bother to raise the issue of whether chastity belts ever existed, although he openly discusses the institution of prostitution, practices of adultery, wedding, marital life, etc.,153–72.

109. Hermann Heinrich Ploss, *Woman in the Sexual Relation: An Anthropological and Historical Survey* (New York: Medical Press, 1964); see also Paula Weidegger, *History's Mistress: A New Interpretation of a Nineteenth-Century Ethnographic Classic* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin; New York: Viking, 1986).
110. H[einrich] Ploss, *Das Weib in der Natur- und Völkerkunde: Anthropologische Studien*, 6th rev. and expanded ed. by Max Bartels (Leipzig: Th. Grieben's Verlag, 1899), III.
111. G. Legman, *Rationale of the Dirty Joke: An Analysis of Sexual Humor.* First Series (New York: Grove Press, 1968), 384.
112. Ploss cites from Pauw's *Recherches philosophes sur les Américains* (Paris: 1781), but does not identify the specific page: "Il consiste en une ceinture tressée de fils d'airain et cadenassée; au-dessus des hanches, au moyen d'une serrure composée de cercles mobiles, où l'on a gravé un certain nombre de caractère et de chiffres. Il n'y a qu'une seule combinaison pour comprimer le ressort qui ouvre, et c'est le secret du mari." It consists of a belt composed of braided iron bands held with a padlock; worn on the hips, held by means of a lock made out of mobile disks on which they have engraved a number of characters and letters. There is only one [number] combination to press the gadget which opens it, and this is the husband's secret.
113. As a source Ploss refers to Misson, but the bibliography does not include any entry for this name or abbreviation, unless it is a misspelling for Missen, *Voy.[age] d'Italie* (no date given).
114. The following pages in the edition of Ploss's work, which I consulted in the Universitätsbibliothek Innsbruck, are missing, perhaps because someone wanted to use the illustration of the chastity belt for personal purposes.
115. Friedrich S. Krauss, "Die Mittel zur Verhinderung des Beischlafs," *Anthropophyteia: Jahrbücher für Folkloristische Erhebungen und Forschungen zur Entwicklung der geschlechtlichen Moral*, ed. Friedrich S. Krauss, Vol. III (Leipzig: Deutsche Verlagsactiengesellschaft, 1906), 247–53; the hand-drawn reproduction of the chastity belt in the possession of Dr. Pachinger in Linz is on plate 1 in the appendix.
116. These are: (1) *Le Plaidoyer de Mr. Freydier, avocat à Nismes, contre l'introduction des cadenas et des ceintures de chasteté* (Collection Gay, ca. 1750), (2) *La cintura de castità ovvero Mezzi meccanici par assicurare la fidelità della Donna*. Ricerche storiche di E. M. (Rome: Casimiro Capaccini editore, 1881), (3) *Padlocks and Girdles of Chastity and Historical and Descriptive Notice. To which is Added Freydiers Speech against their Use in France* (Paris: Isidore Liseux, 1892).
117. *Bilder-Lexikon Kulturgeschichte: Ein Nachschlagewerk für die Begriffe und Erscheinungen auf dem Gebiete der Kulturgeschichte, Sittengeschichte, Folklore, Ethnographie, des Kult- und Mysterienwesens, Gesellschaftslebens, der Chronique*

Scandaleuse, für Zeit-Dokumente und Biographien. Ein Sammelwerk sittengeschichtlicher Bilddokumente aller Völker und Zeiten (Vienna and Leipzig: Verlag für Kulturforschung, 1928–30; rpt. 1961), here Vol. 1, 527–28.

118. He even provides a registration number: D. G. M. Nr. 204.538.
119. Max Bauer, *Deutscher Frauenspiegel: Bilder aus dem Frauenleben in der deutschen Vergangenheit*, 2 vols. (Munich and Berlin: Georg Müller, 1917), 1:182.
120. Hermann Heinrich Ploss, *Das Weib in der Natur- und Völkerkunde*, Vol. 1 (Leipzig: Grieben, 1885), 476. The third edition, edited by Max Bartels, appeared in 1891. The ninth edition, published by Max Bartels, appeared in 1908. This work was also translated into other languages. The last English-language translation appeared in 1964 (New York: Medical Press of New York).
121. Johann Gottfried Schnabel, *Im Irrgarten der Liebe herumtaumelnder Kavalier* (A Gentleman Lost in the Labyrinth of Love), ed. Paul Ernst (Munich: Georg Müller, 1907), 323.
122. *Ich—Ulrich von Liechtenstein: Literatur und Politik im Mittelalter. Akten der Akademie Friesach "Stadt und Kultur im Mittelalter" Friesach (Kärnten), 2.–6. September 1996*, ed. Franz Viktor Spechtler and Barbara Meier. Schriftenreihe der Akademie Friesach, 5 (Klagenfurt: Wieser, 1999).
123. *Meyers Großes Konversations=Lexikon: Ein Nachschlagewerk des allgemeinen Wissens*, 6th edition, completely rev. and expanded (Leipzig and Vienna: Bibliographisches Institut, 1909),10:872.
124. *Meyers Konversations=Lexikon: Eine Encyklopädie des allgemeinen Wissens*. 3rd entirely rev. ed. (Leipzig: Verlag des Bibliographischen Instituts, 1876), 9:982.
125. Alexander Schulz, *Das Band der Venus: Die Geschichte des Keuschheitsgürtels* (Isny/Allgäu: Andreas Schulz Verlag, 1984). I could get hold of one copy from the Staatsbibliothek Berlin through Intelibrary Loan, and I would like to thank the staff at the Main Library of the University of Arizona for their tireless efforts to secure this copy for me. Another copy seems to be in an Austrian library (Österreichische Bibliothekenverbund), and one in the Dortmund Universitätsbibliothek, whereas practically no other library in the world seems to hold a copy.

2 Modern and Medieval Myth-Making

1. See, for instance, the Japanese translation, *Runesansu no nikutaikan*, trans. Tokutaro Yasuda (Tokyo: Kadokawashoten, 1972); the Spanish translation, *Historia ilustrada de la moral sexual*, ed. Thomas Huonker, trans. José Gil Aristu (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1996).
2. Eduard Fuchs, *Illustrierte Sittengeschichte*, Vol. 1: *Renaissance*. Part 1, selected and introduction by Thomas Huonker (1985; Frankfurt a.M.: Tischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1988), 12 (my own translation).

3. For a biography, see Thomas Huonker, "Zur Biographie von Eduard Fuchs," *Illustrierte Sittengeschichte*, Vol. 3, 9–18. See also Walter Benjamin, "Eduard Fuchs, der Sammler und der Historiker," *Gesammelte Schriften*, II, 2, ed. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser. Werkausgabe, 5 (1977; Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1980), 465–505.
4. Walther Killy, "Fuchs," *Deutsche Biographische Enzyklopädie*, ed. Walther Killy, Vol. 3 (Munich, New Providence, et al: K. G. Saur, 1996), 517. See also Thomas Huonker, *Revolution, Moral & Kunst. Eduard Fuchs: Leben und Werk*. Reihe W (Zürich: Limmat Verlag, 1985).
5. Fuchs, *Illustrierte Sittengeschichte*, Vol. 1, 20–21.
6. The relevant legal document from 1928, along with many court briefs by highly respected medical doctors, art historians, and professors of ethics and morality, can be found in the reprint of Fuchs's *Geschichte der erotischen Kunst: Das individuelle Problem I* (Berlin: Verlag Klaus Guhl, 1977), 1–7.
7. Eduard Fuchs, *Geschichte der erotischen Kunst*. Vol. 2: *das individuelle Problem* (Munich: Langen, 1924).
8. Huonker, "Zur Biographie von Eduard Fuchs," Vol. 1, 9–10.
9. Fuchs, *Geschichte der erotischen Kunst: Erweiterung und Neubearbeitung des Werkes "Das erotische Element in der Karikatur" mit Einschluß der ernsten Kunst* (1908; Berlin:Verlag Klaus Guhl, 1977), IX.
10. Fuchs, *Illustrierte Sittengeschichte*, Vol. 1, 276.
11. Fuchs, *Illustrierte Sittengeschichte*, Vol. 1, 277.
12. Fuchs, *Illustrierte Sittengeschichte*, Vol. 1, 277–78.
13. I will discuss Dr. Pachinger's discovery later.
14. Fuchs, *Illustrierte Sittengeschichte*, Vol. 1, 278.
15. Fuchs, *Illustrierte Sittengeschichte*, Vol. 1, 279.
16. Fuchs, Vol. 1, 280, cites a German translation: "Dieser und jener, der kein Weißes im Auge hat, soll mich mit Haut und Haar holen, wenn ich nicht meine Frau auf bergamesisch vernestle, so oft ich mein Serail verlasse" (This person or another who has no white in his eyes [the devil] can get me with skin and hair if I do not knot up my wife in the way the Bergamese do whenever I leave my serail).
17. Fuchs, *Illustrierte Sittengeschichte*, Vol. 1, 281.
18. Fuchs, *Illustrierte Sittengeschichte*, Vol. 1, 283.
19. Eduard Fuchs, *Geschichte der erotischen Kunst*, Vol. 1: *Das zeitgeschichtliche Problem* (Munich: Albert Lang, n.y. [1922]), 162.
20. Vincent T. van Vilsteren and Rainer-Maria Weiss, eds., *100.000 Jahre Sex: Über Liebe, Fruchtbarkeit und Wollust* (Zwolle and Assen: Uitgeverij Waanders, 2003/2004), 86.
21. G. Legman, *Rationale of the Dirty Joke: An Analysis of Sexual Humor*. First Series (New York: Grove Press, 1968), 384.
22. Martina Pall, *Prunkstücke: Schlüssel, Schlösser, Kästchen und Beschläge aus der Hanns Schell Collection* (Graz: Hanns Schell Collection, 2005), 81. Jochen Malms, "Keuschheitsgürtel: Die aufregende Geschichte des eisernen Tugendwächters," *PM—Magazin* 1 (1996): 100–05, reiterates all the well-worn stereotypes and

myths, culling his information from the standard sources, without ever questioning their validity or objectivity.

23. Paul Fritschauer, *Knaurs Sittengeschichte der Welt*, Vol. II: *Von Rom bis zum Rokoko* (1968; Munich and Zürich: Droemer Knaur, 1974), 128.
24. He identifies Siegfried, in a most absurd misreading, as an "abenteuernde[n] Hochstapler, ein[en] rücksichtslose[n] Mitgiftjäger, der zweifellos über außerordentliche Körperkräfte und eine unermüdliche Liebesfähigkeit verfügte, aber von moralischen Gesichspunkten aus ein verwerflicher, liebedienerischer Ausnützer der Gelegenheit" (130; adventurous cheater, a reckless hunter of dowry, who undoubtedly commanded extraordinary physical strength and an untiring power to make love, but from a moral point of view a despicable opportunist).
25. Jan-Dirk Müller, *Spielregeln für den Untergang: Die Welt des Nibelungenliedes* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1998), 273–75.
26. Jungbauer (no first name), "Gürtel," *Handbuch des deutschen Aberglaubens*, ed. E. Hoffmann-Krayer and Hanns Bächtold-Stäubli. Handwörterbücher zur deutschen Volkskunde. Abteilung I: Aberglaube (Berlin and Leipzig: de Gruyter, 1930/1931), Vol. III 1210–30.
27. Lütz Röhrich, "keusch, Keuschheit," *Das große Lexikon der sprichwörtlichen Redensarten*, Vol. 2 (Freiburg, Basel, and Vienna: Herder, 1992), 834–35.
28. Wolfgang Harms and Michael Schilling, together with Barbara Bauer and Cornelia Kemp, eds., *Die Sammlung der Herzog August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel. Kommentierte Ausgabe*, Part 1: *Ethica. Physica*, ed. Deutsche Illustrierte Flugblätter des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts, 1 (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1985), no. IE 126, 213 (commentary on 212).
29. I had the opportunity to examine the copy in the British Museum (1868, 0612, 1556 PPA 102466), but there the entire scene is turned the opposite way, with the husband standing to the right of the bed and the lover kneeling on the left behind the bed curtains. The text of the verses slightly differ from the copy held in Wolfenbüttel. Moreover, in the top border a short version of the German verses in the Dutch language is added: "Wie Jalours syn wil die siet vry my / Want hier meucht ghy sien wat die Jaloursheyt sy / Daerom vorhaer wilt v wachten ghy / Want al hebt ghyn een vrouken schoon en gracieux daer by / En wilt u daerom in geen Jaloursheyt begeuen / Want ghy maeckt u seluen maer suer het seuen / Maer wilt u vroukens het heure gheuen / Soo meuchst ghy onbevreest met heur in vreuchden leuen."
30. Harms et al., *Die Sammlung der Herzog August Bibliothek*, 215 (commentary on 214).
31. Harms et al., *Die Sammlung der Herzog August Bibliothek*, 214.
32. Christa Grössinger, *Humour and Folly*, 107.
33. Fritz Traugott Schulz, "Vogtherr, Heinrich d. J.," *Allgemeines Lexikon der bildenden Künstler von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*, Vol. 34, ed. Hans Vollmer (Leipzig: E. A. Seemann, 1940), 504–07, also identifies Vogtherr the Younger as the creator of this woodcut, 506. Its measures are: 47.7:32 cm. See also Josef Mančal, "Heinrich Vogtherr (ii)," *The Dictionary of Art*,

ed. Jane Turner, Vol. 32 (London: and New York: Macmillan and Grove's Dictionaries, 1996), 681. I consulted the extant copy of the woodcut in the British Museum 1930,1216.10 PRN: PPA89078.

34. Th. Hampe, "Flötner," *Allgemeines Lexikon der bildenden Künstler von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. Hans Vollmer, vol. 12 (Leipzig: E. A. Seemann, 1916), 108–15.
35. Grössinger, *Humour and Folly*, 122.
36. Grössinger, *Humour and Folly*, ch.6, 131–43.
37. A much better reproduction, triple the size, can be found in Max Geisberg, *The German Single-Leaf Woodcut: 1500–1550*, rev. and ed. by Walter L. Strauss (1923–1930; New York: Hacker Art Books, 1974), IV: 144, G.1470. For a biography, see viii.
38. Max Geisberg, *The German Single-Leaf Woodcut*, III: 782. For a brief, though by now somewhat outdated biography, see vii.
39. British Museum, 1930,1216.10 PRN: PPA89078.
40. *The Illustrated Bartsch: German and Netherlandish Masters of the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*, ed. Martha Wolff, Vol. 23 (formerly 10) (New York: Abaris Books, 1985), 99.
41. *The Illustrated Bartsch: German Masters of the Sixteenth Century. Hans Rudolf Manuel (Deutsch), Tobias Stimmer*, ed. Jane S. Peters. Vol. 19 (2) (formerly 9, 2) (New York: Abaris Books, 1988); for Stimmer and other members of this artist family, see Andreas Stolzenburg, "Stimmer," *The Dictionary of Art*, ed. Jane Turner, Vol. 29 (New York: Grove's Dictionary, 1996), 672–75.
42. *The Illustrated Bartsch: Early German Masters. Jacob Bink, Georg Pencz, Heinrich Aldegrever*, ed. Robert A. Koch, Vol. 16 (formerly 8, 3) (New York: Abaris Books, 1980). For Binck (or Bink), see Fulton Torbjörn, "Jakob Binck," *The Dictionary of Art*, ed. Jane Turner, Vol. 4 (New York: Grove's Dictionary, 1996), 67–68.
43. *The Illustrated Bartsch*, Vol. 16, 71–78, nos. 15–37. Hans Georg Gmelin, "Pencz, Georg," *The Dictionary of Art*, ed. Jane Turner, Vol. 24 (New York: Grove's Dictionary, 1996), 355–56.
44. *The Illustrated Bartsch: German Masters of the Sixteenth Century. Erhard Schoen, Niklas Stoer*, ed. Walter L. Strauss, Vol. 13 (Commentary) (New York: Abaris Books, 1984), 553, the illustration is on 554, no. 312(g). For Schön (or Schoen), see Jeffrey Chipps Smith, "Erhard Schön," *The Dictionary of Art*, ed. Jane Turner, Vol. 28 (New York: Grove's Dictionary, 1996), 143–44.
45. *The Illustrated Bartsch*, Vol. 13, no. 312(e).
46. *The Illustrated Bartsch: Early German Masters*, Vol. 16, 63, no. 298.
47. Richard Muther, *Die deutschen Bücherillustration der Gothik und Frührenaissance (1460–1530)*, Vol. 1 (Munich and Leipzig: Georg Hirth, 1884), does not offer any example that might signal the use of a chastity belt, or of any object similar to it.
48. *Bilder-Katalog* zu Max Geisberg, *Der Deutsche Einblatt-Holzschnitt in der ersten Hälfte des XVI. Jahrhunderts: 1600 verkleinerte Wiedergaben*, ed. Hugo Schmidt (Munich: Hugo Schmidt Verlag, 1930), No. 1013, 179.

49. For a good selection of his work held in the British Museum, available online, see http://www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/compass/ixbin/hixclient.exe?%7BUPPER%7D%3Av2_free_text_tindex=aldegrever&_IXDB_=compass&_IXSPFX_=graphical%2Fsummary%2F&_IXFPFX_=graphical%2Ffull%2F&_IXNOMATCHES_=graphical%2Fno_matches.html&%24+%28with+v2_searchable_index%29+sort=.&_IXsearchterm=aldegrever&submit-button=summary (last accessed on Jan. 27, 2006); for a larger collection in the Fine Arts Museum, San Francisco, see http://wwar.com/masters/a/aldegrever-heinrich.html (last accessed on January 27, 2006).
50. Rosemarie Bergmann, "Aldegrever, Heinrich," *The Dictionary of Art*, ed. Jane Turner, Vol. 1 (New York: Grove's Dictionaries, 1996), 591–94; she mentions this scabbard design briefly, but does not examine the details, such as the chastity belt.
51. British Museum B.VIII.437248 1885–7–9–227 PRN: PPA96630. Location: Post-binder Aldegrever small.
52. *The Illustrated Bartsch*. Vol. 16, 191, no. 110.
53. *The Illustrated Bartsch: Early German Artists. Israhel van Meckenem*, ed. Fritz Koreny. *Wenzel von Olmütz and Monogrammists*, ed. Jane C. Hutchison, Vol. 9 (formerly 6, 2) (New York: Abaris Books, 1981), 303, no. 44. For a brief introduction to Wenzel's work, see vol. 9 (Commentary) (formerly 6, 2),129.
54. Walter L. Strauss and Carol Schuler, eds., *The Illustrated Bartsch: German Book Illustration Before 1500*, Vol. 83 (Part IV: *Anonymous Artists 1481–1482*) (New York: Abaris Books, 1982). See also Vol. 86 (New York: Abaris Books, 1984), but I have not checked every volume and examined only representative selections.
55. Dorothy Alexander, in collaboration with Walter L. Strauss, *The German Single-Leaf Woodcut: 1600–1700*, 2 vols. AGA Abaris Graphics Archive, II (New York: Abaris Books, 1977).
56. Alexander, *The German Single-Leaf Woodcut*, 2:500, no. 42.
57. *Illustrations to the Catalogue of Early Italian Engravings Preserved in the Department of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum* (London: British Museum, 1909).
58. Beat Rudolf Jenny, *Graf Froben Christoph von Zimmern: Geschichtsschreiber. Erzähler. Landesherr. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Humanismus in Schwaben* (Lindau and Constance: Jan Thorbecke, 1959); Erica Bastress-Dukehart, *The Zimmern Chronicle: Nobility, Memory and Self-Representation in Sixteenth-Century Germany* (Aldershot, Hants, England, and Burlington, VT, Ashgate, 2002).
59. *Zimmerische Chronik urkundlich berichtet von Graf Froben Christof von Zimmern † 1567 und seinem Schreiber Johannes Müller † 1600.* Nach der von Karl Barack besorgten zweiten Ausgabe neu herausgegeben von Dr. Paul Hermann (Meersburg and Leipzig: F. W. Hendel, 1932), I: 458.
60. *Zimmerische Chronik*, III: 148.
61. *Zimmerische Chronik*, IV: 208.

62. Giovan Francesco Straparola, *Le Piacevoli Notti*. A cura di Donato Pirovano, 2 vols. I Novellieri Italiani (Rome: Salerno Editrice, 2000); see also Ruth B. Bottigheimer, *Fairy Godfather: Straparola, Venice, and the Fairy Tale Tradition* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002); for a biography, see 45–81.
63. Straparola, *Le Piacevoli Notti*, Vol. 2, 805–09.
64. *The Facetious Nights of Straparola*, trans. into English by W. G. Waters (London: The Society of Bibliophiles, 1898), Vol. 1, ix–xii; I have carefully compared the translation with the original and found it to be trustworthy. See also Suzanne Magnanini, "Between Fact and Fiction: The Representation of Monsters and Monstrous Births in the Fairy Tales of Gianfrancesco Straparola and Giambattista Basile," PhD dissertation, University of Chicago, 2000.
65. Robert Bartlett, *Trial by Fire and Water* (Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Vickie L. Ziegler, *Trial by Fire and Battle in Medieval German Literature*. Studies in German Literature, Linguistics, and Culture (Rochester, NY, and Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 2004).
66. *The Facetious Nights of Straparola*, Vol. II, 37–56. The narrative concludes with the following comment: "This is the wretched end which Messer Erminione put to his senseless jealousy, and by these means the young wife was delivered from an ignominious death."
67. For a detailed study of the relationship between Straparola's novellas and one of his Latin sources, Girolamo Morlini's *Novelle*, see Gianni Villani, "Da Morlini a Straparola: problemei di traduzione e problemi del testo," *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana* CLIX [not CLXIX, as often cited] (1982): 67–73.
68. Girolamo Morlini, *Novelle e favole*, a cura di Giovanni Villani. I Novellieri Italiani, 23 (Rome: Salerno Editrice, 1983).
69. Schulz, *Das Band der Venus*, 19.
70. For a sociolinguistic analysis, see Marga Cottino-Jones, "Princesses, Kings, and the Fantastic: A Re-Vision of the Language of Representation in the Renaissance," *Italian Quarterly* 37 (2000): 173–84.
71. Francis M. Kelly and Randolph Schwabe, *A Short History of Costume & Armour: Chiefly in England, 1600–1800* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1931).
72. Wolfgang Bruhn and Max Tilke, *Kostümgeschichte in Bildern: Eine Übersicht der Kostüme aller Zeiten und Völker vom Altertum bis zur Neuzeit einschliesslich der Volkstrachten Europas und der Trachten der aussereuropäischen Länder* (Tübingen: Ernst Wasmuth, 1955).
73. Maurice Leloir, *Dictionnaire du Costume et de ses accessoires des Armes et des Étoffes des origines à nos jours* (Paris: Librairie Gründ, 1951), 78–79.
74. Ludmila Kybalová, Olga Herbenová, and Milena Lamarová, *Das große Bilderlexikon der Mode: Vom Altertum zur Gegenwart*. Trans. from Czech into German by Joachim Wachtel (1966; Dresden: VEB Verlag der Kunst, 1980), 441.

75. Stefanie Zaun, Daniela Watzke, and Jörn Steigerwald, eds., *Imagination und Sexualität: Pathologien der Einbildungskraft im medizinischen Diskurs der frühen Neuzeit*. Analecta Romanica, 71 (Frankfurt a.M: Klostermann, 2004).
76. Anja Belemann-Smit, *Wenn schnöde Wollust dich erfüllt. . .: geschlechtsspezifische Aspekte in der Anti-Onanie-Debatte des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt a.M. et al: Peter Lang, 2003).
77. Diderot and D'Alembert, *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire Raisonné des Sciences, des Arts et des Métiers, par une Société de Gens de Lettres* (1751; Stuttgart and Bad Canstatt: Friedrich Frommann Verlag, 1966), Vol. 2, 799. See also the online version at: http:// www.lib.uchicago.edu/efts/ARTFL/projects/ encyc/ (last accessed on January 27, 2006).
78. Jörn Steigerwald, "*Encyclopédie* der Sexualpathologie," *Imagination und Sexualität: Pathologien der Einbildungskraft im medizinischen Diskurs der frühen Neuzeit*, 137–63.
79. *Œuvres complètes de Voltaire*. Nouvelle édition, Vol. 9 (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1877), 566 (no line numbers). See also the online version of this edition: http://www.voltaire-integral.com/Html/09/32_Cadenas.html (last accessed on January 27, 2006). I would like to express my gratitude to my colleague Lise Leibacher, Department of French and Italian, University of Arizona, for pointing out this text to me.
80. Götz Müller, *Gegenwelten: Die Utopie in der deutschen Literatur* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1989), 71–83.
81. *Das Werk Johann Gottfried Schnabels und die Romane und Diskurse des frühen 18. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Günter Dammann and Dirk Sangmeister. Hallesche Beiträge zur europäischen Aufklärung, 25 (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2004); David E. Wellbery and Judith Ryan, eds., *New History of German Literature* (Cambridge, MA, and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), does not even list Schnabel's name. But see Christoph Suin de Boutemard, "Anmerkungen zu den Rezensionen der Neuausgaben von Schnabels 'Insel Felsenburg' (1828) und 'Cavalier' (1830) in den 'Blättern für literarische Unterhaltung' und in der 'Allgemeinen Literatur-Zeitung'," Jahrbuch der Johann-Gottfried-Schnabel-Gesellschaft 1 (2000): 125–39.
82. Johann Gottfried Schnabel, *Der im Irrgarten der Liebe herumtaumelnde Kavalier, oder Reise= und Liebesgeschichten eines vornehmen Deutschen von Adel, Herrn von St.*, . . ., bearbeitet und herausgegeben von Paul Aretz (Berlin: Wilhelm Borngräber, n.y. [1920].
83. Johann Christoph Adelung, *Grammatisch-kritisches Wörterbuch der Hochdeutschen Mundart mit beständiger Vergleichung der übrigen Mundarten, besonders aber der Oberdeutschen*, Vol. 2 (Leipzig: Johann Gottlob Immanuel Breitkopf, 1796), 1566.
84. Joachim Heinrich Campe, *Wörterbuch der Deutschen Sprache*, Vol. 2 (Braunschweig: Schulbuchhandlung, 1808), 923.
85. This was one of those German dictionaries which openly reflected the influence of German Social-Nationalism, see Wenke Mückel, *Trübners*

"Deutsches Wörterbuch"—ein Wörterbuch aus der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus: Eine lexikografische Analyse der ersten vier Bände (erschienen 1939–1943). Lexicographica. Series Maior, 125 (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2005).

86. *Trübners Deutsches Wörterbuch*, ed. Alfred Götze, Vol. 4 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1943), 139.
87. *Brockhaus: Die Enzyklopädie in vierundzwanzig Bänden*, 20th ed., Vol. 11 (Leipzig and Mannheim: F. A. Brockhaus, 1997), 694. A comparison with *Der neue Brockhaus: Lexikon und Wörterbuch in fünf Bänden und einem Atlas*, 7th completely rev. ed., Vol. 3 (Wiesbaden: Brockhaus, 1985), 134, demonstrates that the article on the chastity belt was not changed at all over twelve years. In fact, it would not matter how far back we would go in checking previous *Brockhaus* editions regarding the chastity belt, since the myth, once established in an encyclopedia, happily lives on for a very long time.
88. http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Keuschheitsg%C3%BCrtel (last accessed on January 27, 2006)
89. http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Keuschheitsg%C3%BCrtel (last accessed on (last accessed on January 27, 2006)
90. Hugo Hayn and Alfred N. Gotendorf, eds., *Bibliotheca Germanorum Erotica & Curiosa: Verzeichnis der gesamten deutschen erotischen Literatur mit Einschluß der Übersetzungen nebst Beifügung der Originale*, 8 vols. and one addendum (Munich: Georg Müller, 1912–14). This bibliography only includes a category for chastity (*Keuschheit*) (3, 542).
91. *Duden: Das große Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache in zehn Bänden*, 3rd completely rev. and expanded ed., Vol. 5 (Mannheim, Leipzig, Vienna, and Zurich: Dudenverlag, 1999), 2104.
92. Tobler-Lommatzsch, *Altfranzösisches Wörterbuch*. Adolf Toblers nachgelassene Materialien bearbeitet und mit Unterstützung der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften herausgegeben von Erhard Lommatzsch, Vol. 2 (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1956), 87–88; for "chastëé, chäesté," see 303.
93. Frédéric Godefroy, *Dictionnaire de l'ancienne langue française et de tous ses dialectes du IXe au XVe siècles*, Vol. 2 (1883; Vaduz: Kraus Reprint, 1965), 7.
94. *Trésor de la langue française*, publié sous la direction de Paul Imbs, Vol. 5 (Paris: Editions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1977), 350–52.
95. *Larousse du XXe siècles en six volumes*. Publiés sous la direction de Paul Augé, Vol. 2 (Paris: Librairie Larousse, 1929), 65.
96. *Enciclopedia Hoepli*, Vol. 2 (Milan: Editore Ulrico Hoepli, 1963), 421.
97. *Enciclopedia Italiana di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti* (Rome: Istitvto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1950), 379–81.
98. Salvatore Battaglia, *Grande Dizionario della Lingua Italiana*, Vol. 3 (Turin: Unione Tipografico-Editrice Torinese, 1964), 164.
99. There is not even an entry for Bacchelli in the *Grande Dizionario*, Vol. 1, 926.
100. *Enciclopedia Italiana*, Vol. 5, 780.
101. See, for instance, *Grande Dizionario Enciclopedico UTET*. Fondato da Pietro Fedele, 4th ed. (Turin: Unione Tipografico-Editrice Torinese, 1986), 92–93.

102. J. Heinsius, *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal*. Vol 8/1 ('S Gravenhagen en Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff, A. W. Sijthoff, 1916), 528–29. The entry also includes a reference to "Kuischheidsgelofte," which translates as "vow of chastity," but no word about a chastity belt.
103. G. Geerts and H. Heestermans, *van Dale Groot Woordenboek der Nederlandse Taal*, 12th ed. (Utrecht and Antwerpen: Van Dale Lexicografie, 1995), 1571.
104. Dominus du Cange, *Glossarium Mediae et Infimae Latinitatis*, Vol. 2 (Niort: L. Fabvre, 1883), 331–32.
105. *Mittellateinisches Wörterbuch bis zm ausgehenden 13. Jahrhundert* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1968), II, 1:579–82; see also the *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources*, ed. R. E. Latham. Fascicule II C (London: Oxford University Press, 1981), 338; J. F. Niermeyer & C. Van de Kieft, *Mediae Latinitatis: Lexicon Minus*, rev. by J. W. J. Burgers (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2002), I:236, both with the same negative result.
106. Here cited from the online version at: http:// www.corpusthomisticum.org/xec2.html (last accessed on January 27, 2006).
107. *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Vol. V, 9th ed. (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1878). The same is the case with the American version (Chicago: The Werner Company, 1894), Vol. V.
108. I examined the 1944 edition, the 1958 edition, the 1974 edition, the 1978 edition, the 1985 edition, all to no avail.
109. *London Encyclopædia, or Universal Dictionary of Science, Art, Literature, and Practical Mechanics* (London: Thomas Tegg, 1829), V: 343.
110. John Mason, Olinthus Gregory, Newton Bostworth, *Pantologia: A New Cabinetcyclopædia* (London: Walker, et al., 1819), III: no page given.
111. Abraham Rees, *The Cyclopedia; or Universal Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, and Literature*, Vol. VII (London: Longman, Hurst, et al., 1819), 3Z4b–4A1a.
112. *Encyclopædia Perthensis; or Universal Dictionary of Knowledge* (Perth: C. Mitchel and Co., [1806?]), 441.
113. See, for instance, *Encyclopædia Britannica* (Chicago, London, et al: Encyclopædia Britannica, 1965), 432–33.
114. Here I have used the online version, based on the CD-ROM edition.
115. *The Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1933), 300–01.
116. Philip Babcock Gove, ed., *Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Languages, Unabridged* (Springfield, MA: G & C. Merriam Company, 1971), 379.
117. Elizabeth Knowles, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of Phrase and Fable* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 201. There are no references, no citations, and no sources.
118. Lo Duca, ed., *Moderne Enzyklopädie der Erotik: Sexologia-Lexikon* (1962; Munich, Vienna, and Basel: Kurt Desch, 1963). This was reprinted in 1966 and 1969. The original title reads: *Dictionnaire de sexologie, sexologialexikon; sexologie générale, sexualité, contre-sexualité, érotisme, érotologie, bibliographie*

universelle. It was reprinted in 1967 under the new main title: *Nouveau dictionnaire de sexologie* (Paris: L'Or du temps), and once again in 1972 (Paris: Propera), this time without the lengthy subtitle. This encyclopedia does not seem to have been translated into languages other than German. The article on the chastity belt, 329–33, is richly illustrated. I had access only to the German translation and could get hold of a copy in the University Library of Freiburg i.B. only in the rare book reading room. As the introductory text on the inside fold of the dust jacket announces: "Das Werk ist nicht für Jugendliche bestimmt, und die Abgabe bleibt beschränkt auf den Kreis von Personen, die die beruflichen und geistigen Voraussetzungen für den Erwerb dieser Enzyklopädie mitbringen" (This work is not intended for young adults, and it can be sold only to those people who bring with them the professional and intellectual preconditions for the acquisition of this encyclopedia). Obviously, the problematic situation for a scientific treatment of sexuality in its cultural-historical context, as Eduard Fuchs had experienced it with his *Sittengeschichte*, continues until today.

119. Most likely, the artist mentioned might be Jean Honoré Fragonard (1732–1806), but there are several other contemporary artists with the same last name, see E. Bénézit, *Dictionnaire critique et documentaire des peintres, sculpteurs et graveurs de tous les temps et de tous les pays*. Nouvelle éd. . . .sous la direction de Jacques Busse. Vol. 5 (Paris: Gründ, 1999), 625–29.
120. I could not verify this artist; he is, at least, not listed in Bénézit's *Dictionnaire*, and in other similarly comprehensive art history reference works.
121. G. Legman, *Rationale of the Dirty Joke*, 384.
122. Robert M. Goldenson and Kenneth N. Anderson, *Sex A to Z* (New York: World Almanac, 1989), 44.
123. Rufus C. Camphausen, *The Encyclopedia of Erotic Wisdom: A Reference Guide to the Symbolism, Techniques, Rituals, Sacred Texts, Psychology, Anatomy, and History of Sexuality* (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions International, 1991), xv.
124. For a serious study on the Inquisition, see Edward Peters, *Inquisition* (New York: Free Press, and London: Collier and Macmillan, 1988).
125. John Money and Herman Musaph, eds., *Handbook of Sexology* (Amsterdam, London, and New York: Excerpta America, 1977), includes articles on virginity, but not on chastity or the girdle of chastity; see also Clive M. Davis, William L. Yarber, Robert Bauserman, George Schreer, and Sandra L. Davis, eds., *Handbook of Sexuality-Related Measures* (Thousand Oaks, London, and New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1998).
126. Jordan, "Chastity Belt," 108.
127. Catalogue no. 5149. According to one of the museum curators, Dr. Ulrich Morgenroth (e-mail sent on August 23, 2005), this and another specimen in their collection was in all likelihood produced by the British company Hugessen in Essex sometime after 1870, when they started to sell a large number of theses apparatuses under the official label "hat rests." In 1970

the company requested a tax exempt status, arguing that their products served as birth control mechanisms. The museum holds another chastity belt, catalogue no. 5149, which allegedly dates from 1630 and was supposed to have been discovered inside a wall of a patrician's house in South Germany. But Dr. Morgenroth rejects this assumption as a myth as well. I would like to thank Dr. Morgenroth for his information.

128. Jean-Josef Brunner, *Der Schlüssel im Wandel der Zeit*. Suchen und Sammeln, 14 (Bern and Stuttgart: Paul Haupt, 1988), 214.
129. The history of medieval hygiene still has to be written. Studies on the everyday life do not yet venture into these intimate areas, although they were of critical importance then as well. See, for example, Harry Kühnel, ed., *Alltag im Spätmittelalter*, 3rd ed. (1984; Graz, Vienna, and Cologne: Styria, 1986); Paul B. Newman, *Daily Life in the Middle Ages* (Jefferson, NC, and London: McFarland, 2001), 137–57. Daniel Furrer, *Wasserthron und Donnerbalken: Eine kleine Kulturgeschichte des stillen Örtchens* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2004), focuses on the history of the toilet only. But for the history of gynecology, see Soei Han Lie Orlanda, *Vrouwengeheimen: geneestkunst en beeldvorming in de Middelnederlandse artesliteratuur* (Amsterdam: De Buitenkant, 1999); Monica H. Green, ed., *Women's Healthcare in the Medieval West: Texts and Contexts*. Variorum Collected Studies Series (Aldershot, Burlington, et al: Ashgate, 2000).
130. Eva Larraß, "Der Keuschheitsgürtel—Phantasie und Wirklichkeit," *Waffen- und Kostümkunde: Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für Historische Waffen- und Kostümkunde* 34 (1992): 1–12; here 1. Her source, Karl Maria Feldhaus, *Ka-Pi-Fu und andere verschämte Dinge: Ein fröhlich Buch für stille Orte mit Bildern* (Berlin: the author), 1921, was nothing but a satirical, entertaining booklet for those, as the subtitle indicates, who needed some reading material while they spent time in the bathroom.
131. Alfred Kind, *Die Weiberherrschaft in der Geschichte der Menschheit*, 3 vols. (Munich: A. Langen, 1913 [not 1914, as Larraß claims]). Larraß never examined this volume herself and cites from an unnamed source.
132. This chastity belt is today kept in the *Deutsches Schloss- und Beschlägemuseum* in Velbert, near Essen, Germany, under the catalogue no. 881. It originated from the Collection P. Lussow in Munich and had originally been discovered in 1889 by Dr. Pachinger (see my discussion). I would like to thank Dr. Ulrich Morgenroth, curator in the museum, for his information (e-mail, August 23 and 29, 2005). For background information regarding this museum, see Ulrich Morgenroth, *Four Hundred Years and More. . . : Locks and Fittings from Velbert* (Velbert: Scala, 2003).
133. For a variety of perspectives toward the often problematic relationship between text and image, see Kathryn Starkey and Horst Wenzel, eds., *Visual Culture and the German Middle Ages*. The New Middle Ages (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, England, and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

134. *Chiaroscuro: The Clair-Obscur Woodcuts by the German and Netherlandish Masters of the XVIth and XVIIth Centuries*. A Complete Catalogue with Commentary by Walter L. Strauss (London: Thames and Hudson, 1973), No. 48, 97.
135. *Chiaroscuro*, No. 49, 98.
136. *Chiaroscuro*, No. 96, 192.
137. Paul Lacroix, *History of Prostitution Among All the Peoples of the World, From the Most Remote Antiquity to the Present Day*, trans. Samuel Putnam, Vol. 2 (New York: Covici, Friede Publishers, 1931); Nickie Roberts, *Whores in History: Prostitution in Western Society* (London: HarperCollins, 1992), 79–81. See also Leah Lydia Otis, *Prostitution in Medieval Society: The History of an Urban Institution in Languedoc*. Women in Culture and Society (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1985); Vern Bullough and Bonnie Bullough, *Women and Prostitution: A Social History* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1987), 110–38; Nils Johan Ringdal, *Love for Sale: A World History of Prostitution*, trans. from Norwegian by Richard Daly (1997; New York: Grove Press, 2004).
138. Niklas Stoer (d. 1562/1563), created a woodcut showing Margrave Joachim of Brandenburg, holding a very similar key, though at least three times as big, which symbolized his claim to his political rank, see *Bilder-Katalog*, ed. Hugo Schmidt, 1930, No. 1402, 239.
139. Schulz, *Das Band der Venus*, 32, the illustration is on the facing page 33.
140. Schulz, *Das Band der Venus*, 45–46.
141. Helmut Nickel, "Einige Bemerkungen zum Thema 'Keuschheitsgürtel,'" *Waffen- und Kostümkunde: Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für Historische Waffen- und Kostümkunde* 36 (1994): 139–43; here 141.
142. Reay Tanna Hill, *Sex in History* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1980), 276.
143. There is no reason to believe that the crime of rape occurred more often in the Middle Ages than today. Tanna Hill simply claims this without any statistical or historical analysis because it contributes to the sensationalism of his account, a typical feature of many non-scholarly studies on the medieval era. For the history of rape, see, for instance, Corinne Saunders, *Rape and Ravishment in the Literature of Medieval England* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2001), 33–75; Elizabeth Robertson and Christine M. Rose, eds., *Representing Rape in Medieval and Early Modern Literature*. The New Middle Ages (New York and Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave, 2001); for detailed legal-historical studies on rape in the Middle Ages, see James A. Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Europe* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 47–48, 209–10, 249–50, et passim.
144. Eva Larraß, "Der Keuschheitsgürtel," i.
145. As an aside, serious scholars dealing with the history of sexuality both in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance steer clear of the myth of the chastity belt and focus on the factually identifiable knowledge available in those centuries, see Sander L. Gilman, *Sexuality: An Illustrated History*. *Representing*

the Sexual in Medicine and Culture from the Middle Ages to the Age of AIDS (New York, Chichester, et al: John Wiley & Sons, 1989).

146. Annette Lawson, *Adultery: An Analysis of Love and Betrayal* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 166.
147. T(imothy) W(ilson), "Chastity Belt," *Fake? The Art of Deception*, ed. Mark Jones, with Paul Craddock and Nicolas Barker (London: British Museum Trustees, 1990), 70. Not surprisingly, the very object here studied is not depicted. Wilson's only reference is Jean-Josef Brunner, *Der Schlüssel im Wandel der Zeit*. Suchen und Sammeln, 14 (Bern and Stuttgart: Haupt, 1988), 214–15. I will discuss Brunner's study, which simply reiterates traditional mythical viewpoints, listed further. See also A. R. E. North, "Instruments of Torture," *Why Fakes Matter: Essays on Problems of Authenticity*, ed. Mark Jones (London: British Museum Press, 1993), 93–99, with several illustrations. With respect to Francesco II di Carrara, he emphasizes that these torture instruments and the chastity belt held in the Doge's Palace in Venice are only "associated with him. The appearance of the belt suggests that it is later than the early fifteenth-century ascribed to it. . .It should be noted that these novelties were made in substantial numbers in the nineteenth century." The reason for the creation of such torture instruments in the nineteenth century would be quite obvious: "Dr. Alan Borg has pointed out that a number of the Tower of London's instruments of torture, some dating back to the sixteenth century, were shown in a special display which was set up in the late seventeenth century and was intended to show examples of Spanish frightfulness from the time of the Armada." Nevertheless, as North confirms, an inventory of the Doge's Palace in Venice from 1548 describes the detestable specimen as "the iron knickers of the wife of the Prince of Padua" (all quotes on 94). In all likelihood, curators of sixteenth-century art collections already knew how to appeal to public taste of a sado-masochistic nature and skillfully drew from urban legends about this "cruel" and tyrannical ruler of Padua to satisfy popular demands for horrifying torture instruments on public display. As North comments, summarizing his observations regarding torture instruments allegedly of medieval provenance: "instruments of torture of the most elaborate kind are still being made to thrill and horrify the inquisitive visitor." As to the exhibit at the London Dungeon, which no visitor should miss: " 'you can have a truly horrible day out'!" (96).
148. For a recent introductory article on Marie de France, see Albrecht Classen, "Marie de France," http://www.litencyc.com/php/speople.php?rec=true&UID=5494 (2003) (last accessed on January 27, 2006).
149. Jean Rychnerx, ed., *Les lais de Marie de France*.x Classiques français du Moyen Age, 93 (Paris: Champion, 1983); here I have used *The Lais of Marie de France*, trans., with an introduction and notes, by Robert Hanning and Joan Ferrante. Foreword by John Fowles (New York: Dutton, 1978). This is also included in Albrecht Classen, ed., *Eroticism and Love in the*

Middle Ages, 5th ed. (1994; Mason, OH: Thomson Custom Publishing, 2004), 224. For an English translation in prose, see *The Lais of Marie de France*. Trans. with an Introduction by Glyn S. Burgess and Keith Busby (London: Penguin, 1986).

150. June Hall McCash, "*La vie seinte Audree*. A Fourth Text by Marie de France?" *Speculum* 77, 3 (2002): 744–77.
151. Nancy Van Durling, "The Knot, the Belt, and the Making of Guigemar," *Assays: Critical Approaches to Medieval and Renaissance Texts* 6 (1991): 29–53.
152. Ulrich Marzolph, "Gürtel," *Enzyklopädie des Märchens*, ed. Rolf Wilhelm Brednich, Vol. 4 (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1990), 311–15.
153. O. B. Hardison, Jr., "General Introduction," *Medieval Literary Criticism: Translations and Interpretations*, ed. O. B. Hardison, Jr., Alex Preminger, Kevin Kerrane, Leon Golden (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1974), 3–38.
154. R. Howard Bloch, *The Anonymous Marie de France* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), 48–49; see also Nancy Vine Durling, "The Knot, the Belt, and the Making of *Guigemar*," 29–53.
155. Rupert T. Pickens, "Thematic Structure in Marie de France's *Guigemar*," *Romania* 95 (1974): 328–41; here 340, also uses the term "chastity belt," but obviously only in a very loose understanding: "Unable to force the lady's chastity belt off despite repeated attempts, Meriadu realizes that only Guigemar can open it. This the hero does in order to assure himself of the lady's identity. . ."
156. Quoted from Nancy Vine Durling, "The Knot, the Belt, and the Making of Guigemar," 41. For the symbolic use of "knots" in a text, as used by Chrétien de Troyes, see Douglas Kelly, "The Source and Meaning of *conjointure* in Chrétien's *Erec* 14," *Viator* 1 (1970): 179–200.
157. Durling, "The Knot, the Belt, and the Making of Guigemar," 46.
158. For the original and the English translation, see the edition by Rychner and the translation by Hanning and Ferrante.
159. *Das Nibelungenlied*, nach der Ausgabe von Karl Bartsch, herausgegeben von Helmut de Boor, 21st rev. and expanded ed. by Roswitha Wisniewski (1870–1880; Wiesbaden: Brockhaus, 1979), stanzas 666–80. For the English translation, see *The Nibelungenlied*. A New Translation by A. T. Hatto (1965; London: Penguin, 1969), 90–93. One of the best critical examinations of this crucial scene is now offered by Irmgard Gephart, *Der Zorn der Nibelungen: Rivalität und Rache im "Nibelungenlied"* (Cologne, Weimar, and Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 2005), 70–77.
160. R. Howard Bloch, *The Anonymous Marie de France*, 83–89, offers an interpretation of this lai which is riddled with problematic readings and blatant distortions of the basic plot line. By contrast, Marco D. Roman's study ("Reclaiming the Self Through Silence: *The Riverside Counselor's Stories* and the Lais of Marie de France," *Crossing the Bridge: Comparative Essays on Medieval European and Heian Japanese Women Writers*, ed. Barbara Stevenson and Cynthia Ho. The New Middle Ages [New York and

Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, England: Palgrave, 2000], 175–88; here 176–85) offers a brilliant analysis of male verse female speech and silence.

161. Helmut Plechl, "Studien zur Tegernseer Briefsammlung des 12. Jahrhunderts IV, 1: Tegernsee unter den Äbten Konrad I. und Rupert (1126–1186)," *Deutsches Archiv für die Erforschung des Mittelalters* 13 (1957): 35–114; Dieter Schaller, "Zur Textkritik und Beurteilung der sogenannten Tegernseer Liebesbriefe," *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 101, 1 (1982): 104–21.
162. Jürgen Kühnel, *Dû bist mîn, ih bin dîn. Die lateinischen Liebes- (und Freundschafts-) Briefe des clm 19411. Abbildungen, Text und Übersetzung*. Litterae, 52 (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1977); see also Albrecht Classen, *Frauen in der deutschen Literaturgeschichte: Die ersten 800 Jahre. Ein Lesebuch*. Ausgewählt, übersetzt und kommentiert von Albrecht Classen. (Women in German Literature), 4 [New York, Washington, DC, et al: Peter Lang, 2000], 66–67; Anne L. Klinck, *An Anthology of Ancient and Medieval Woman's Song* (New York and Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 97–98.
163. Ulrich Marzolph, "Gürtel," *Enzyklopädie des Märchens*, ed. Rolf Wilhelm Brednich, Vol. 6 (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1990), 311–15. He also refers briefly to Marie de France, but again without establishing in any concrete sense that Guigemar might have given a chastity belt to his lady.
164. Schulz, *Das Band der Venus*, 13–14.
165. *The Poetry of William VII, Count of Poitiers, IX Duke of Aquitaine*, ed. and trans. Gerald A. Bond (New York: Garland, 1982), 14–17, vv.47–48. This is a modified translation taken from Karen Sullivan, *Truth and the Heretic: Crises of Knowledge in Medieval French Literature* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 90.
166. Sullivan, *Truth and the Heretic*, 90. The use of the term "chastity belt" (note 14) in this context seems to be inappropriate, though scholarship has freely resorted to it, not understanding the anthropological and historical implications involved. See Nicolò Pasero, " 'Devinalh,' 'non-senso,' e 'interiorizzazione testuale': osservazioni sui rapporti fra strutture formali e contenuti ideologici nella poesia provenzale," *Cultura neolatina* 28 (1968): 113–46; and Philippe Ménard, "Sens, contresens, non-sens, réflexions sur la pièce 'Farai un vers de dreyt nien' de Guillaume IX," *Mélanges de Langue et de littérature occitanes en hommage à Pierre Bec*, par ses amis, ses collègues, ses élèves (Poitiers: Université de Poitiers, C. E. S. C. M., 1991), 338–48.
167. Sullivan, *Truth and the Heretic*, 94.
168. Bond, *The Poetry of William VII*, 64.
169. Martín de Riquer, *Los trovadores: Historia literaria y textos*, Vol. I (Barcelona: Editorial Planeta, 1975), 114.
170. Frede Jensen, ed. and trans., *Troubadour Lyrics: A Bilingual Anthology*. Studies in the Humanities: Literature—Politics—Society, 39 (New York, Washington, et al: Peter Lang, 1998), 68–69.

171. Jensen, *Troubadour Lyrics*, 448.
172. William W. Kibler and Lawrence Earp, "Machaut, Guillaume de," *Medieval France: An Encyclopedia*, ed. William W. Kibler and Grover A. Zinn (New York and London: Garland, 1995), 573–75; see also http://www.anthologie.free.fr/anthologie/machaut/machaut.htm (last accessed on January 27, 2006).
173. Guillaume de Machaut, *Le Livre Dou Voir Dit* (The Book of the True Poem), ed. Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, trans. R. Barton Palmer (New York and London: Garland, 1998).
174. Hans Biedermann, *Knaurs Lexikon der Symbole* (Munich: Droemersche Verlagsanstalt Th. Knaur Nachf., 1989), 387–89; J. Poeschke, "Schlüssel" (81–82); "Schlüsselübergabe an Petrus" (82–85), *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie*, ed. Engelbert Kirschbaum, Vol. 4 (Rome, Freiburg, Basel, and Vienna: Herder, 1972).
175. Schulz, *Das Band der Venus*, 13.
176. Schulz, *Das Band der Venus*, 13: "Aus dem Gedankenspiel, das die Dichter mit ihren Angebeteten pflegten, hat ihnen die Nachwelt einen Strick gedreht, wenigstens, was den Keuschheitsgürtel angeht" (Posterity has laid a trap for the poets out of their own games of fantasy, at least concerning the chastity belt).
177. One of the best treatments of this topic can be found in Bernd-Ulrich Hergemöller's *Sodom and Gomorrah: On the Everyday Reality and Persecution of Homosexuals in the Middle Ages*, trans. John Phillips (1998; London and New York: Free Association Books, 2001). The "classical" study still proves to be John Boswell's *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1980).
178. Otto Richard Meyer, *Der Borte des Dietrich von der Glezze: Untersuchungen und Text*. Germanistische Arbeiten, 3 (Heidelberg: Carl Winters Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1915). For recent studies on this extraordinary verse narrative, see Christa Ortmann and Hedda Ragotzky, "Minneherrin und Ehefrau. Zum Status der Geschlechterbeziehung im 'Gürtel' Dietrichs von der Glezze und ihrem Verhältnis zur Kategorie *gender*," *Manlîchiu wîp, wîplîch man: Zur Konstruktion der Kategorien 'Körper' und 'Geschlecht' in der deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters*, ed. Ingrid Bennewitz and Helmut Tervooren. Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie, 9 (Berlin: Schmidt, 1999), 67–84; Petrus W. Tax, "Zur Interpretation des 'Gürtel' Dietrichs von der Glezze," *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 124, 1 (2005): 47–62.
179. Wirnt von Grafenberg, *Wigalois*. Text der Ausgabe von J. M. N. Kapteyn übersetzt, erläutert und mit einem Nachwort versehen von Sabine Seelbach und Ulrich Seelbach (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 2005), 281–443; 537–39; 610–27.
180. Volker Schmidtchen and Hans-Peter Hils, "Kyeser, Konrad," *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters: Verfasserlexikon*, 2nd completely rev. ed. by

Kurt Ruh et al., Vol. 5 (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1985), 477–84. The relevant research literature can be found here.

181. See also Lynn White, "Kyeser's 'Bellifortis': The First Technological Treatise of the Fifteenth Century," *Technology and Culture* 10 (1969): 436–41; Udo Friedrich, "Herrscherpflichten und Kriegskunst. Zum intendierten Gebrauch früher *Bellifortis*-Handschriften," *Der Codex im Gebrauch: Akten des Internationalen Kolloquiums 11.–13. Juni 1992*, ed. Christel Meier, Dagmar Hüpper, and Hagen Keller. Münstersche Mittelalter-Schriften, 70 (Munich: Fink, 1996), 197–210.
182. K. H. Ludwig, "Kyeser, Conrad," *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, ed. Robert-Henri Bautier et al. (Munich and Zurich: Artemis & Winkler, 1991), 1595–96.
183. Christoph Graf zu Waldburg Wolfegg, "Der Münchener 'Bellifortis' und sein Autor," *Bellifortis: Clm 30150*, ed. Konrad Kyeser. Kulturstiftung der Länder—Patrimonia, 137 (Munich: KulturStiftung der Länder and Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, 2000), 21–60; here 23.
184. The parchment manuscripts are in Universitätsbibliothek Göttingen, MS. philos. 64; Universitätsbibliothek Heidelberg, Cod. Pal. Germ. 787; Österreichische Nationalbibliothek Wien, MS. lat. 5278; Österreichische Nationalbibliothek Wien (Vienna), MS. lat. 3068 (previously known as MS. Ambras. 230).
185. Wolfegg, "Der Münchener," 32, carefully formulates: "Die noch erhaltenen Exemplare eines solchen Gürtels, oft mit Seide und Samt bezogen, weisen mehr in die Richtung der erotischen Spielereien als in die eines zweifelhaften Werkzeugs zum Schutz der Tugend" (Those still preserved specimen of such a girdle, often covered with silk, seem to be more objects of erotic playfulness than dubious tools to protect virtue). See also Eva Larraß, "Der Keuschheitsgürtel. Phantasie und Wirklichkeit," *Waffen- und Kostümkunde* 34 (1992): 1–12; Helmut Nickel, "Einige Bemerkungen zum Thema Keuschheitsgürtel," *Waffen- und Kostümkunde* 36 (1994): 139–43. I will exam both their arguments later.
186. Conrad Kyeser, aus Eichstätt, *Bellifortis*. Umschrift und Übersetzung von Götz Quarg (Düsseldorf: Verlag des Vereins Deutscher Ingenieure, 1967), Vol 1: facsimile, Vol. 2: transcription and translation, here 91.
187. Brunner, *Der Schlüssel im Wandel der Zeit*, 214, unreflectively states: "Nachgewiesen und dargestellt wird dieser Gegenstand erstmals im Jahre 1405 in der Handschrift Konrad Kyesers. . ." (this object is first documented and illustrated in 1405 in Conrad Kyeser's manuscript).
188. Quang, *Bellifortis*, 91.
189. Quang, *Bellifortis*, 96.
190. Quang, *Bellifortis*, 91.
191. Brunner, *Der Schlüssel im Wandel der Zeit*, 215: "Die beiden mit Stacheln versehenen Öffnungen sind für die Notdurft vorgesehen und vom Standpunkt der Hygiene aus völlig ungenügend" (The two openings, equipped with teeth, are destined for relieving oneself and are, considering

hygiene, entirely insufficient). This chastity belt is kept in the *Deutsches Schloss- und Beschlägemuseum* in Velbert, Germany.

192. Albrecht Classen, *The German Volksbuch: A Critical History of a Late-Medieval Genre*. Studies in German Language and Literature, 15 (Lewiston, Queenston, and Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1995), 215–16.
193. Andreas Beriger, *Windesheimer Klosterkultur um 1500: Vita, Werk und Lebenswelt des Rutger Sycamber*. Frühe Neuzeit, 96 (Tübingen, Niemeyer, 2004), 33. I would like to thank Peter Dinzelbacher for pointing out this reference.
194. *Tutte le Opere di Giovanni Boccaccio*, a cura di Vittore Branca, Vols. VII–VIII (Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori, 1998), Bk. 9, ch. 1, 880–82.
195. Stith Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature: A Classification of Narrative Elements in Folk-Tales, Ballads, Myths, Fables, Mediaeval Romances, Exempla, Fabliaux, Jest-Books, and Local Legends*. FF Communications, 106–09, 116–17 (Helsinki, Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1932–36). An online version is now available as well (Charlottesville, VA: InteLex Corp, 2004). However, this version is not publicly accessibly and needs to be purchased: http://library.nlx.com/display.cfm?&clientID=82746&depth=2&infobase=pmmotif.nfo&softpage=GetClient42&titleCategory=0&view=browse (according to the response from January 27, 2006).
196. D. P. Rotunda, *Motif-Index of the Italian Novella in Prose* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1942), 197, No. T373.
197. Janet Levarie Smarr, "Sercambi, Giovanni," *Medieval Italy: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Christopher Kleinhenz, 2 vols. (New York and London: Routledge, 2004), 1021–22.
198. Giovanni Sercambi, *Il Novelliere*, a cura di Luciano Rossi, Vol. III (Rome: Salerno Editrice, 1974), 24–28; Giovanni Sercambi, *Novelle*, nuovo testo critico con studio introduttivo e note a cura di Giovanni Sinicropi, 2 vols. Filologia: Testi e Studi, 5 (Florence: Casa Editrice Le Lettere, 1995), No. CXXX, 1035–39; here I will cite from the latter edition by Sinicropi, but in consultation with the former by Rossi.
199. Giovanni Sercambi, *Il Novelliere*, a cura di Luciano Rossi, 23, n.6.
200. Sercambi, *Novelle*, a cura di Sinicropi, 1039, comments that Marco is not punished for his stupidity in believing that every woman would fall for his idiotic trick with the chastity belt, but instead for his stupid sadism: "la gara di perfidia fra i due sposi non ha lo scopo di punire la buaggine del marito, ma il suo stupido sadismo."
201. Natalie Zemon Davis, *Fiction in the Archives: Pardon Tales and their Tellers in Sixteenth-Century France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987), 111–12.
202. Davis, *Fiction*, 113; Robert F. Berkhofer III, *Day of Reckoning: Power and Accountability in Medieval France*. The Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), also demonstrates how much vast sections of medieval historical documents were fakes, produced by medieval

clerics for very specific legal, economic, and political reasons. As he explains: "As abbots and monks began to alter their lands, the need for written comprehension of them increased since memory would no longer suffice as a means to comprehend the estates and collect their revenues" (89).

203. Gian Paolo Marchi, "Facezie del Quattrocentro," *Dizionario critico della letteratura italiana*, diretto da Vittore Branca. Secunda ed. (Turin: Unioni Tipografico-Editrice, 1986), 211–14; here 213.
204. Alcide Bonneau, who translated Cornazano's *Proverbes en facéties* in 1884, does not yet mention him at all in his study on the chastity belt, *Padlocks and Girdles of Chastity*, 1931 (orig. 1883). Eduard Fuchs, *Padlocks and Girdles of Chastity*, 1909–12, fleetingly mentions Cornazano's narrative, but was obviously entirely blind to the satirical nature of the motif of the chastity belt.
205. *Proverbs in Jests or The Tales of Cornazano (XVth century)*. Literally translated into English. With the English text (Paris: Isidore Liseux, 1888). This work appeared for the first time in modern print in 1812, then in 1865 (reprinted in 1968), 1888, 1929, and was translated into French in 1884 (reprinted in 1970) and into German in 1906 and 1967.
206. *Proverbs in Jests*, vi.
207. *Proverbs in Jests*, xxii.
208. Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978); cf. A. L. Macfie, ed., *Orientalism: A Reader* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000).
209. Dafydd Johnston, ed. and trans., *Medieval Welsh Erotic Poetry* (Grangetown, Cardiff, 1991), 117.
210. Dafydd Johnston, "Erotica and Satire in Medieval Welsh Poetry," *Obscenity: Social Control and Artistic Creation in the European Middle Ages*, ed. Jan M. Ziolkowski. Cultures, Beliefs and Traditions, 4 (Leiden, Boston, and Cologne, Brill, 1998), 60–72; here 67. I would like to thank Peter Dinzelbacher for pointing out this poem to me.
211. Thomas Bein, *Liebe und Erotik im Mittelalter* (Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 2003), 23; for broader perspectives, see Albrecht Classen, ed., *Discourses on Love, Marriage, and Transgression in Medieval and Early Modern Literature*. Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 278 (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2004).
212. For a most detailed historical account of the Carraresi family and its demise in Padua, see Benjamin G. Kohl, *Padua Under the Carrara, 1318–1405* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 303–36.
213. The situation was much more complex than can and need be traced here, see Kohl, *Padua under the Carrara*, 245–69.
214. Antonio Zardo, *Il Petrarca e i Carraresi: studio* (Milan: U. Hoepli, 1887).
215. Lawrin Armstrong, "Padua," *Medieval Italy: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Christopher Kleinhenz, Vol. 2 (New York and London: Routledge, 2004), 815–22; here 821–22.
216. Johann Heinrich Zedler, *Grosses vollstændiges Universal Lexicon Aller Wissenschaften und Kuenste*, Vol. 5 (1733/1961), 1142.

217. W. Carew Hazlitt, *The Venetian Republic: Its Rise, its Growth, and its Fall, 421–1797* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1900), I: 751.
218. Hazlitt, *The Venetian Republic*, 757.
219. Hazlitt, *The Venetian Republic*, 759, cites from contemporary sources.
220. Hazlitt, *The Venetian Republic*, 760–61.
221. Benjamin G. Kohl, *Padua under the Carrara*, 275–96. Of course, Kohl focuses entirely on political, military, economic, and legal conditions, and does not spend any attention on Francesco's personal life.
222. See the extraordinarily meticulous study by Attilio Simioni, *Storia di Padova dalle origini alla fine del secolo XVIII* (Padua: Giuseppe e Pietro Randi Librai, 1968), ch. X through XIII.
223. *Enciclopedia Italiana di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti*, rpt. (1931; Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1950), IX:150. Curiously, neither Francesco I nor Francesco II are discussed separately among the many other major Italian figures with the same name (vol. XV). See also Italo Raulich, *La caduta dei Carraresi: signori di Padova, con documenti* (Padua: Drucker & Senigaglia, 1890); Edoardo Piva, *Venezia, Scaglieri e Garraresi: storia di una persecuzione del secolo XV* (Rovigo: Edoardo Piva, 1899) [this is an extremely rare item, and I could only find one copy in the Staatsbibliothek Berlin through an online search]; Luigi Montobbio, *Splendore e utopia nella Padova dei Carraresi* ([Venice:] Corbo e Fiore, 1989); Gigi Vasoin, *La signoria dei Carraresi nella Padova del '300* (Padua: "La Garangola", 1988).
224. *Grande Dizionario Enciclopedico UTET*, fondato da Pietro Fedele, 3rd ed. (Turin: Unione Tipografico-Editrice Torinese, 1967), IV:131–32; here 132, only comments regarding Francesco Novello: "signore brillante e largo mecenate come il suo predecessore, ma costretto a soccombere di fronte ai Veneziani che, dopo averlo catturato, lo fecero strangolare in carcere (1406)."
225. "Carrare (François II, ou Novello de)," J. Fr. Michaud, *Biographie Universelle, Ancienne et Moderne*, rpt. (1854; Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1966), 50–51; here 51.
226. Hazlitt, *The Venetian Republic*, 765; he also emphasizes, "it is capable of proof that the fate of the Carrarese was not proximately due to their ambitious projects or their resistance to the Venetian arms, but to ulterior revelations of the existence of a plot, which would have thrown the Gobba conspiracy into the shade. The form of execution, again, was the least ignominious which could have been devised. They were not beheaded, like the avogador Giustiniani. They were not poisoned, as Novello had poisoned his ally Guglielmo de la Scala. They were not left to die in torments, like the unhappy men whom Novello's father had formerly suspected of conspiring against him. They were strangled in prison, like Lentulus, the accomplice of Catiline and the progenitor of the Cornari."
227. David Syme, *The Fortunes of Francesco Novello da Carrara, Lord of Padua, an Historical Tale of the Fourteenth Century, from the Chronicles of Gataro, with Notes* (Edinburgh: Constable and Co., and London: Hurst, Chance, and Co., 1830), offers a minute account of the military events, going into

amazing details concerning the various sieges, campaigns, negotiations, and defeats. But there is no indication whatsoever that would incriminate Francesco II as a man fascinated by torture instruments, sexual perversion, and chastity belts. Of course, Gataro, a contemporary chronicler, composed his account as an obvious sympathizer with the duke, but there are not even comments about any concubines, personal conflicts with his wife, or of public accusations of Francesco's possible moral shortcomings.

228. Caufeynon, *La ceinture de chasteté*, 27–29.
229. Quoted from Syme, *The Fortunes of Francesco Novello da Carrara*, 206.
230. Quoted from Syme, *The Fortunes of Francesco Novello da Carrara*, 113.
231. Quoted from Syme, *The Fortunes of Francesco Novello da Carrara*, 131.
232. Quoted from Syme, *The Fortunes of Francesco Novello da Carrara*, 180.
233. Quoted from Syme, *The Fortunes of Francesco Novello da Carrara*, 194.
234. Schulz, *Das Band der Venus*, 15.
235. Guido Ruggiero, *The Boundaries of Eros: Sex, Crime, and Sexuality in Renaissance Venice*. Studies in the History of Sexuality (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).
236. Guido Ruggiero, *Violence in Early Renaissance Venice*. Crime, Law, and Deviance (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1980).
237. According to an e-mail communication with the Servizio Marketing Immagine Comunicazione of the *Musei Civici Veneziani* (August 24, 2005), the belt is still exhibited in the Palazzo Ducale, Armeria—Sala 4, inv: 388.
238. Bonneau, *Padlocks and Girdles*, 26.
239. Gattaro, *Istorio Padovana*, here cited from Bonneau, *Padlocks and Girdles*, 26. Bonneau also cites Andrea Navagero, *Storia della Republica Venezia* and Sanuto, *Vite dé Duchi di Venezia*, but does not provide any further bibliographical information; see also Hazlitt, *The Venetian Republic*, 763, who reaches the same conclusion regarding Francesco's personality: ". . .yet when he chose, winning and gracious in his manner."
240. Brunner, *Der Schlüssel im Wandel der Zeit*, 214.
241. Syme, *The Fortunes of Francesco Novello da Carrara*, 237.
242. Giuseppe Cappeletti, *Storia di Padova: Dalla sua origine sino al presente*, Vol. 1 (Padova: Premiata Tipografia Editrice F. Sacchetto, 1874).
243. John Esten Keller, *Motif-Index of Mediaeval Spanish Exempla* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1949), 53–57; Reginetta Haboucha, *Types and Motifs of the Judeo-Spanish Folklore*. The Garland Folklore Library, 6 (New York and London: Garland, 1992), also knows of no narrative example that might include a reference to a chastity belt.
244. Ernest W. Baughman, *Type and Motif-Index of the Folktales of England and North America*. Indiana University Folklore Series, 20 (The Hague: Mouton, 1966), 388–89.
245. Tom Peete Cross, *Motif-Index of Early Irish Literature*. Indiana University Publications: Folklore Series, 7 (Bloomington: Indiana University, n.y.), 488–90.

246. In an extensive study I examined more than twenty of the most important late-medieval and early-modern German songbooks. In this context I discovered only one song in which chastity, that is, the test of chastity, plays any role, whereas chastity belts do not seem to exist as a motif in this song genre. Albrecht Classen, *Deutsche Liederbücher des 15. und 16. Jahrhunderts*. Volksliedstudien, 1 (Münster, New York, Munich, and Berlin: Waxmann, 2001). I would like to thank Barbara Boock, Deutsches Volksliedarchiv, Freiburg i.Br., for her kind support in my research. In fact, negative results are sometimes even more conclusive than partially positive results. This certainly applies to the myth of the chastity belt.
247. Bruno Fritsch, *Die erotischen Motive in den Liedern Neidharts*. Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik, 189 (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1976), 107–10; Stefan Zeyen,. . .*daz tet der liebe dorn: Erotische Metaphorik in der deutschsprachigen Lyrik des 12.–14. Jahrhunderts*. Item Mediävistische Studien, 5 (Essen: Item-Verlag, 1996), 151–53; for a discussion of the belt in the *Nibelungenlied*, see Jerold C. Frakes, *Brides and Doom: Gender, Property, and Power in Medieval German Women's Epic*. Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), 125. There is much scholarship on the belt in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, see, for instance, Ji-Soo Kang, "The Green Girdle and the Narrative Circularity in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight," *The Journal of English Language and Literature* 41, 4 (1995): 927–45.
248. Gertrud Blaschitz and Stefan Krabath, "Schmuck im mittelalterlichen Alltag unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des Schatzfundes von Fuchsenhofen," *Der Schatzfund von Fuchsenhof*. Studien zur Kulturgeschichte von Oberösterreich, ed. Bernhard Prokisch and Thomas Kühtreiber, 15 (2005): 735–74; here 769–70.
249. Ilse Fingerlin, *Gürtel des hohen und späten Mittelalters*. Kunstwissenschaftliche Studien, 46 (Munich and Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 1971); Elke Brüggen, *Kleidung und Mode in der höfischen Epik des 12. und 13. Jahrhunderts*. Beihefte zum Euphorion, 23 (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1989), 90–94; for a cultural and anthropological history of belts, see Anne Leurquin, *A World of Belts: Africa, Asia, Oceania, America. From the Ghysels Collection*. Photos by Mauro Magliani, trans. Isabel Ollivier (Milan: Skira; New York: St. Martin's Press, 2004).
250. Enite in Hartmann von Aue's *Erec* (ca. 1170) is richly dressed in preparation for her wedding, and so is also given a valuable belt: "ouch wart vrouwen Ênîten / gegurt umbe ir sîten / ein rieme von Îberne: / den tragent die vrouwen gerne" (1556–59). Quoted from: Hartmann von Aue, *Erec*. Mittelhochdeutscher Text und Übertragung von Thomas Cramer (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 2003). See also: *The Complete Works of Hartmann von Aue*, trans. with commentary by Frank Tobin, Kim Vivian, Richard H. Lawson (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 72. Similarly, the sick protagonist in Hartmann von Aue's *Der arme Heinrich*, who suffers from leprosy and can only be healed through the

heart blood of a virgin willing to die for him, finds such a nubile woman: the daughter of the farmer at whose estate Heinrich spends his life after having withdrawn from courtly society. She proves to be willing to die for him after she has apparently fallen in love with him. This budding love between them finds its symbolic expression in his gift-giving. Heinrich showers her with erotically highly charged objects such as a mirror, hair ribbons, a belt, and rings. In their secrecy, he even calls her his wife: "mit dienste brâhte er si ûf die vart, / daz si im alsô heimlich wart / daz er si sîn gemahel hiez" (339–41), quoted from Hartmann von Aue, *Der arme Heinrich*, ed. Hermann Paul, 16th, newly rev. ed. by Kurt Gärtner. Altdeutsche Textbibliothek, 3 (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1996); for a English translation, see *The Complete Works*, 221; for a recent discussion of this scene, see Melitta Weiss Adamson, "Illness and Cure in Hartmann von Aue's *Arme Heinrich* and *Iwein*," *A Companion to the Works of Hartmann von Aue*, ed. Francis G. Gentry. Studies in German Literature, Linguistics, and Culture (Rochester, NY, and Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 2005), 125–40; here 131: "What Heinrich consciously or subconsciously triggers in the girl is her sexual awakening, and all the emotional turmoil that comes with puberty." The erotic symbolism of the belt is self-evident, which might provide a useful explanation for the subsequent, though quite erroneous, association of a sartorial belt with the "chastity belt."

251. Antonio Panormita, *Hermaphroditus*, trans., with an Introduction and notes by Eugene O'Connor (Lanham, Boulder, et al: Lexington Books, 2001), No. VI, 131.
252. O'Connor, *Hermaphroditus*, 35. See also his brief comment, 88.
253. O'Connor, *Hermaphroditus*, 3–7.
254. Schulz, *Das Band der Venus*, 16–17, emphasizes that Antonio had dedicated his *Hermaphroditus* to Cosimo de Medici of Florence, which might have explained the subsequent association of the chastity belt with this city. However, Conrad Kyeser already had associated his satirical object with Florentine women.
255. Johann Fischart, *Geschichtsklitterung (Gargantua)*. Text der Ausgabe letzter Hand von 1590. Mit einem Glossar herausgegeben von Ute Nyssen (Düsseldorf: Karl Rauch, 1963), 37. The full title reads: *Affentheuerlich Naupengeheurliche Geschichtsklitterung: Von Thaten und Rhaten der vor kurtzen langen unnd je weilen Vollenwolbeschreiten Helden und Herren Grandgoschier Gorgellantua und deß deß Eiteldurstlichen Durchdurstlechtigen Fürsten Pantagruel von Durstwelten, Königen in Utopien. . .*, a clear signal of its highly satirical nature. For a biographical overview, see Hans-Jürgen Bachorski, "Fischart, Johann," *Literatur Lexikon: Autoren und Werke deutscher Sprache*, ed. Walther Killy, Vol. 3 (Gütersloh and Munich: Bertelsmann Lexikon Verlag, 1989), 384–87.
256. Ute Nyssen, *Johann Fischart: Geschichtsklitterung. Glossar. Worterläuterungen zum Text der Ausgabe letzter Hand von 1590 nach der Neuausgabe 1963* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1977), 40. She explains the term

"Pantzerfleck" as "Stück zur Ausbesserung e. Panzers. . . Keuschheitsgürtel" (a piece to repair an armor. . .chastity belt).

257. Alcuin Blamires with Karen Pratt and C. W. Marx, eds., *Woman Defamed and Woman Defended: An Anthology of Medieval Texts* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 18–19, 26–27, 48–49, 127–28, 141–42, 192–193, et passim; R. S. M. Prudence Allen, *The Concept of Woman*, Vol. II: *The Early Humanist Reformation 1250–1500* (Grand Rapids, MI, and Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 186–87, 265–67, 515–16, 752–53, et passim.
258. A medieval example would be the anonymous thirteenth-century verse novella *Aucassin et Nicolette* where the king lies in child-bed, whereas the queen fights on the fields; for an English translation, see Albrecht Classen, ed., *Eroticism and Love in the Middle Ages*, 5th rev. and expanded ed. (Mason, OH: Thomson Custom Publishing, 2004), 415–44; for a history of this topos, see Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*. Trans. from German by Willard R. Trask. Bollingen Series, XXXVI (1948; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 94–98.
259. François Rabelais, *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, trans. Burton Raffel (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1990), 15.
260. Schulz, *Das Band der Venus*, 49–57, with an extensive excerpt in German translation.
261. Ludwig von Brunn, ed., *Ars Erotica: Die erotische Buchillustration im Frankreich des 18. Jahrhunderts*, 3 Vols. (Schwerte: Harenberg, 1983–89), 1:89.
262. von Brunn, *Ars Erotica*, 197.
263. Most erotic artists from the eighteenth through the twentieth century prove to be interested in the sexual act and the sexual organs only and hence do not incorporate the chastity belt, perhaps because this would primarily appeal to those interested in sado-masochism. See, for example, Peter Weiermair, ed., *Erotic Art: From the 17th to the 20th Century* (Frankfurt a.M: Frankfurter Kunstverein and Edition Stemmle, 1995), where no illustration offered even the hint of a chastity belt. The only exception might be Willi Geiger's (1878–71) cycle "Das gemeinsame Ziel," which includes one colored drawing of a woman wearing a suspicious looking slip, but there is no padlock to be seen, and the rather violent performance of the female figure does not suggest at all that she might wear a chastity belt (69).
264. Numerous examples can of course be found on the world wide web, see, for instance, http://home.teleport.com/~gumball/chastity.html (last accessed on January 27, 2006). These photos show some of the best known museum pieces available today on the web.
265. Gilles Néret, *Erotica Universalis* (Cologne: Benedikt Taschen, 1994), 736–46. The subsequent illustrations by Eneg conform to the same approach.
266. Vern L. Bullough, Dwight Dixon, and Joan Dixon, "Sadism, Masochism and History, or When is Behaviour Sado-Masochistic?" *Sexual Knowledge,*

Sexual Science: The History of Attitudes to Sexuality, ed. Roy Porter and Mikuláš Teich (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 47–62.

267. Françoise Borin, "Judging by Images," *A History of Women in the West*, III.: *Renaissance and Enlightenment Paradoxes*, ed. Natalie Zemon Davis and Arlette Farge (1991; Cambridge, MA, and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1993), 187–254; here 226, 228.
268. Brasch, *How Did Sex Begin?: The Sense and Nonsense of the Customs and Traditions That Have Separated Men and Women Since Adam and Eve* (New York: David McKay Company, 1973), 22.

3 Another Myth

1. The flood of webpages dealing with the flat-earth-theory is staggering, see, for instance, http://www.alaska.net/~clund/e_djublonskopf/FlatWhyFlat.htm (last accessed on January 27, 2006). Whether satirical spoofs, or serious efforts, this electronic discourse demonstrates that the flat-earth-theory is still alive.
2. William Chester Jordan, "Droit du seigneur," *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, Supplement 1 (New York, Detroit, et al: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2004), 167–68.
3. Jordan, "Droit," 167.
4. "Jus primae noctis," *Bilder-Lexikon Kulturgeschichte*, 1928, 505–06.
5. See also Frances Eleanor Palermo Litvack, *Le Droit du Seigneur in European and American Literature: From the Seventeenth through the Twentieth Century* (Birmingham, AL: Summa, 1984); Hermann Friedrich Wilhelm Schmidt-Bleibtreu, *Jus primae noctis im Widerstreit der Meinungen: eine historische Untersuchung über das Herrenrecht der ersten Nacht* (Bonn: Röhrscheid, 1988).
6. H. Ihm, "Jus primae noctis. Ein alter Bestreiter des Brauches," *Anthropophyteia: Jahrbuch für ethnologische, folkloristische und kulturgeschichtliche Sexualforschungen*, ed. Friedrich S. Krauss, Vol. X (Leipzig: Ethnologischer Verlag, 1913): 183–89; here 186.
7. Ihm, "Jus primae noctis," 189.
8. Jordan, "Droit," 167.
9. Jordan, "Droit," 167.
10. James Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Europe* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1987). Although he is most thorough in his detailed discussion of the entire corpus of medieval laws concerning sex and marriage, he has nothing to say about the *Jus* (and for that matter, nothing about the chastity belt either). We can trust his implied conclusion that church law did not know of this *Jus* and of the chastity belt.
11. Karl Schmidt, *Jus Primae Noctis: Eine geschichtliche Untersuchung* (Freiburg i.Br.: Herder, 1881); a copy of this book is available on microfilm; I used the copy in the Library of the University of Arizona.
12. Schmidt, *Jus Primae Noctis*, 3–5.
13. Schmidt, *Jus Primae Noctis*, 230–38, illustrates through painstaking research how difficult it can be to disprove a myth, especially when it appeals to the masses and confirms preconceived notions.

14. Jay Ruud, ed., *Encyclopedia of Medieval Literature* (New York: Facts on File, 2006), 608–09.
15. *The Tain*, trans. from the Irish Epic *Tain Bo Cuailnge* by Thomas Kinsella (London, New York, and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), 4–5. I would like to express my gratitude to Michael J. Curley, The University of Puget Sound, Tacoma, WA, for pointing out this passage to me.
16. Alain Boureau, *Le droit de cuissage: La fabrication d'un mythe XIIIe–XXe siècle* (Paris: Editions Albin Michel, 1995).
17. Jörg Wettlaufer, *Das Herrenrecht der ersten Nacht: Hochzeit, Herrschaft und Heiratszins im Mittelalter und in der frühen Neuzeit* (Frankfurt a.M. and New York: Campus, 1999).
18. Boureau, *Le droit*, 160–61.
19. Boureau, *Le droit*, 192.
20. Boreau, *Le droit*, 225.
21. See, for instance, Michel Zink, *The Enchantment of the Middle Ages*, trans. Jane Marie Todd. Parallax: Re-Visions of Culture and Society (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); Roger Dahood, ed., *The Future of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: Problems, Trends, and Opportunities for Research*. Arizona Studies in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, 2 (Brepols: Turnhout, 1998); Andrew E. Mathis, *The King Arthur Myth in Modern American Literature* (Jefferson, NC, and London: McFarland & Company, 2002).

4 The Nature of Myths Revisited

1. See, for instance, the beautifully well-balanced arguments from both sides of the debate at: http://www.actionbioscience.org/evolution/nhmag.html and at: http://skepdic.com/intelligentdesign.html (both last accessed on January 27, 2006). See also the wide range of opinions, all well-argued, in John Angus Campbell and Stephen C. Meyer, eds., *Darwinism, Design, and Public Education*. Rhetoric and Public Affairs Series (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2003). Celeste Michelle Condit's contribution, "The Rhetoric of Intelligent Design: Alternatives for Science and Religion," 421–40, proves to be the perhaps most sensitive and insightful discussion of the polar positions, so, for instance, when she claims: "This is to say that intelligent design is a bad argument for religious purposes because it accepts the criterion and worldview of science, which is the very metaphysical mind-set it would seek to deny. In the process, intelligent design advocates give up on exploring and advancing the kinds of discussion that are truly important for nonscientific discourse. That is an enormously consequential error" (433). By the same token, she does not take the side of science unequivocally, and encourages us to comprehend "that there remains much that scientists don't know and that one of those things is how life on Earth began" (433).
2. See the contributions to *Imagination und Sexualität: Sexualität: Pathologien der Einbildungskraft im medizinischen Diskurs der frühen Neuzeit*. Analecta Romanica, 71 (Frankfurt a.M: Klostermann, 2004), 2004.

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und der darinnen lebenden Geschoepfe; imgleichen aller menschlichen Handlungen, Staats=Recht=Krieges=Policey=Haushaltungs=und gelehrten Geschaeffte, Handthierungen und Gewerbe, sammt einer Erklaerung der dabey vorkommenden Kunstwoerter und Redensarten, von neuem durchgesehen, verbessert und stark vermehrte von Johann Joachim Schwaben (Königsberg and Leipzig: Zeisens Witwe und Hartungs Erben, 1767).

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INDEX